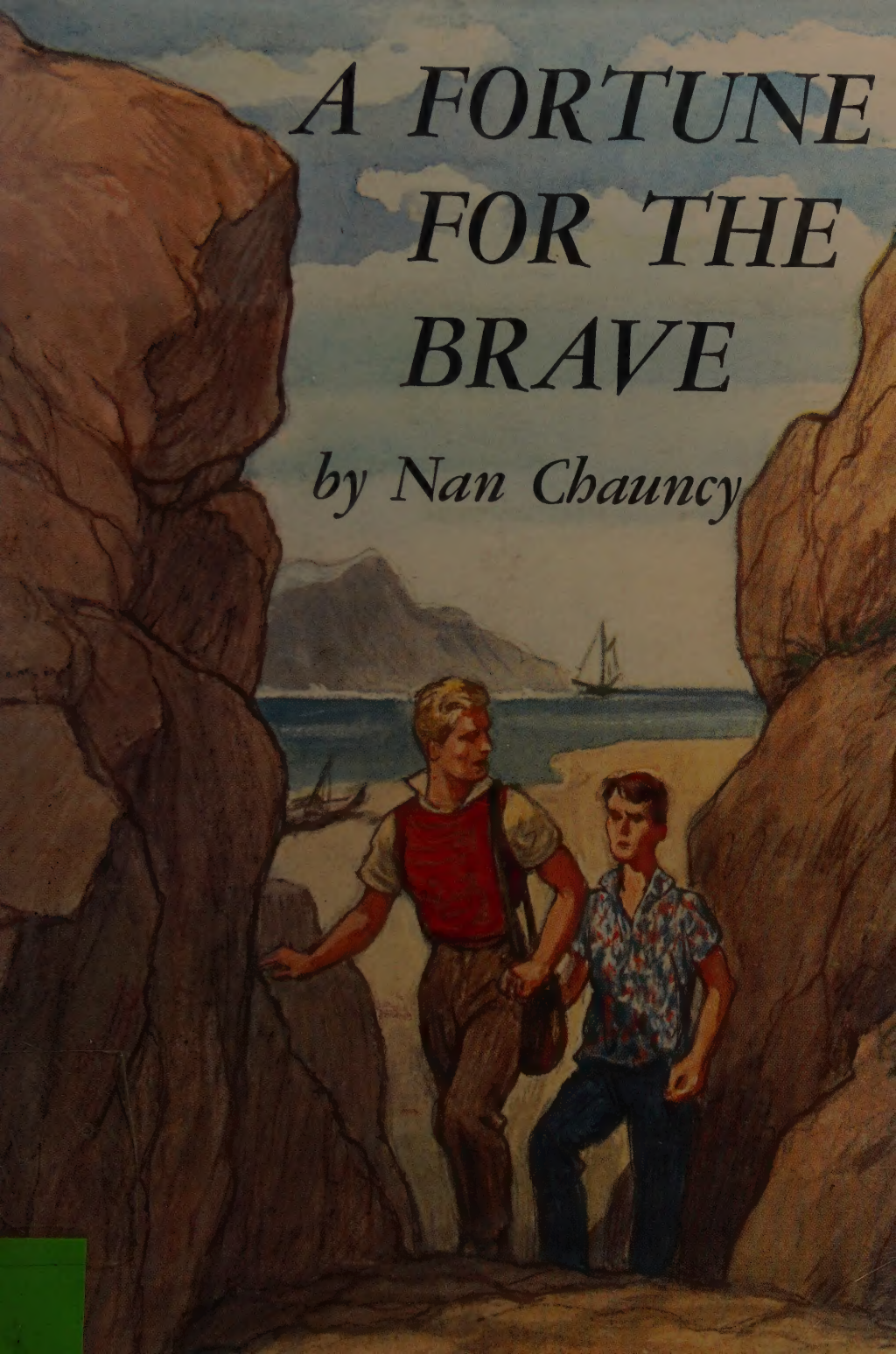


A FORTUNE FOR THE BRAVE

by Nan Chauncy



A FORTUNE FOR THE BRAVE

WHEN Huon Trivett left England to learn farming in the Australia his father had loved, he took along his father's diary with its map of a rocky island and its mystifying mention, on a torn page, of ". . . a fortune for the brave."

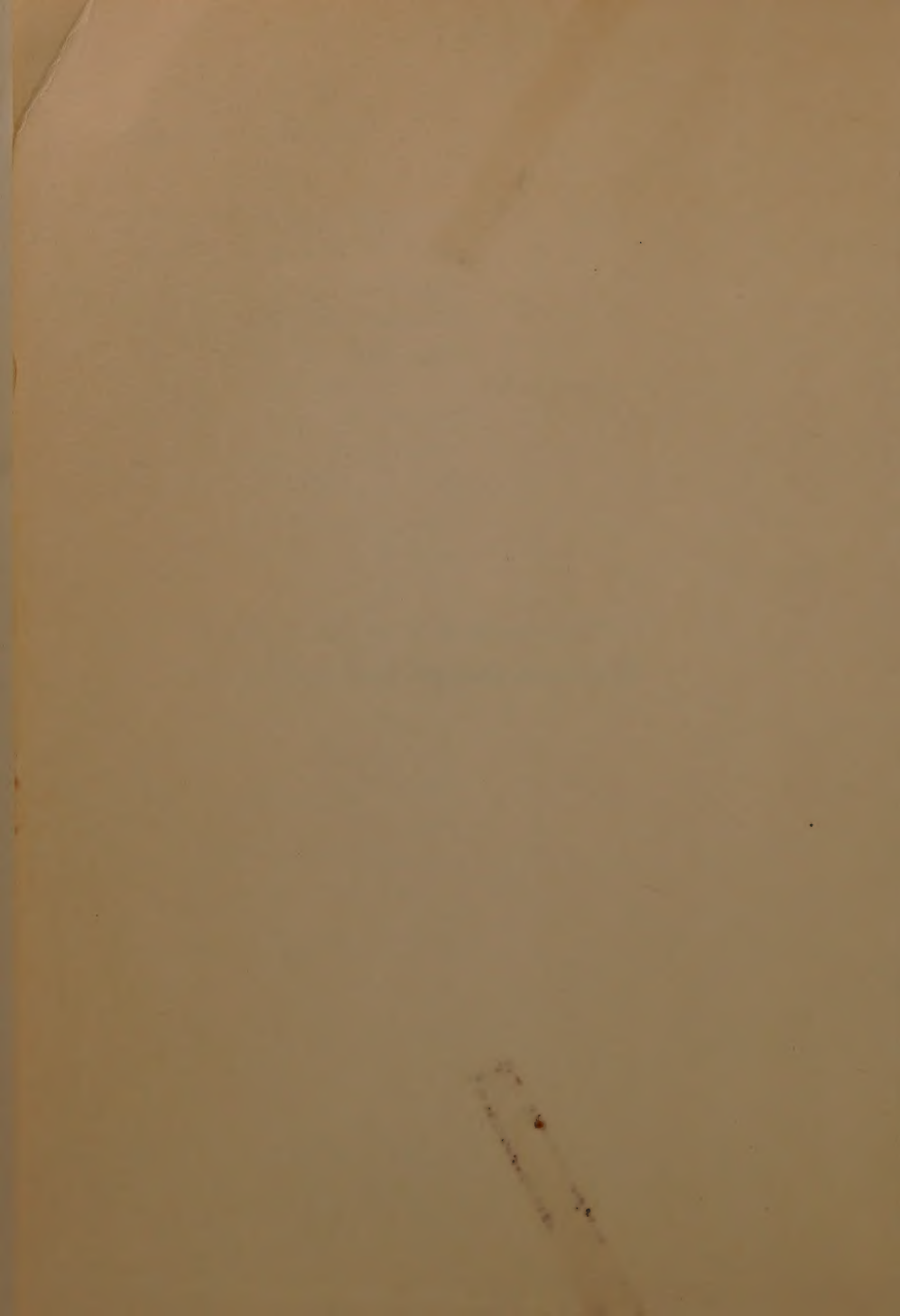
He found no friend among his four cousins on their down-at-the-heel plantation. From Lloyd, the oldest (a good-looking youth of Hu's own age), from the two younger brats, and even from 16-year-old Gina, came nothing but rudeness. Only their mother, vague Aunt Myrtle, was kind.

But Hu's chance meeting in the woods with a self-taught young naturalist, Jim Stone, meant a wonderful new friendship and the start of a solution of the mystery of the diary map. The reader will be as surprised at the outcome as Hu — and his arrogant cousins.

(see back flap)

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A FORTUNE FOR THE BRAVE

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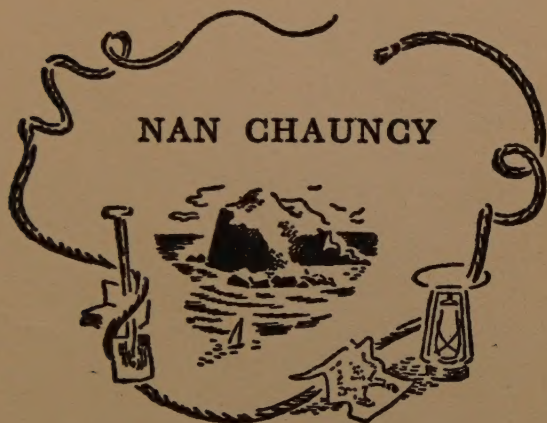
TANGARA

THEY FOUND A CAVE

TIGER IN THE BUSH

WORLD'S END WAS HOME

A FORTUNE FOR THE BRAVE



Illustrated by Margaret Horder

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To
JAN OF THE HOUSEBOAT
and
JOHN OF THE BEES

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I

A House Built by Convicts

ON the east coast of Tasmania where the world's sunshine is doled out in full measure, there stands a gaunt, solid house of stone. Pine trees protect it on three sides from winds and sea breezes; the fourth side faces the sea.

In winter the waves break and boom against the high rocky cliffs, but Fipwood is placed a little back from these and looks rather like a rocky headland itself. The stones of its walls were laid by convicts more than a hundred years ago, when Tasmania was a penal settlement known as Van Diemen's Land, and the rest of Australia—except Botany Bay—was even less occupied

by white men. In its time these walls have given protection against raiding aborigines and bushrangers, as well as wild winter storms.

There has been little change in the house itself since those old days. The big rooms are still lit by oil lamps, and most of the water supply comes from rain water collected from the roof; the vast stables are still in use, though only for one elderly horse; the haylofts and grain stores are the same—except that they are empty. But the place looks shabby and ill-kept, and nearly all the land, which was a free grant to the original settlers, has been sold.

With the selling of the land the source of wealth departed so that the Goguds, the grandchildren of the first settlers, have something of a white elephant in their big house. No one thinks seriously now of repairs when a slate shingle is blown from the roof. Strangely enough, the less they do for the place, the prouder the Goguds become of living in historic Fipwood.

Certainly there can be few sights more beautiful than the view from the neglected garden across the great bay formed by the sweeping embrace of Freycinet's Peninsula, with the shadowed and mysterious Schouten Islands in the foreground, and the great lump of Maria Island partly visible to the south. On blue days the children have fun with the old brassbound telescope, picking out the more distant islands.

What land remains to Fipwood slopes at the back toward the bush and a vast inland lagoon of shallow

water, where hundreds of black swans nest in their season. It is hidden from sight by trees; and the bush also conceals the narrow road that connects Fipwood with the world outside. A few small farms are the only dwellings between the homestead and Sandy Cove to the south, a "town" of three shops and a handful of houses.

On this particular day of September, which is the springtime month in Tasmania, the yard at the back of the house was gay with the blossom of an unpruned peach tree and the riot of yellow wattle, and here the three Gogud boys were gathered in the sunshine.

Lloyd, very much the elder, had in his hand a soft rag with which he was polishing his already shining motor bike; Theodor—"Tacky"—the youngest, was basking in the warmth, full stretch on his back. Prosper, who had a family reputation to keep up for "brains," had propped himself against the heavy chopping block with a book on his knees. He was not reading, however, but listening to sounds that came from the upper story.

"What's going on, Pros?" Tacky inquired sleepily. "Is Gina up there?"

"Yes, can't you hear? She's having fun and games with old mother Scrag Bag."

"Is she?" Tacky sat up in order to hear better.

Lloyd took no notice of them: he was intent on his own reflection as seen, slightly distorted, in the gas tank, and was smiling at it. Allowing for the distortion

and a smear of oil on one cheek, an extremely handsome youth smiled back at him, and the oil gave him ideas . . . instantly he was away on one of his secret dreams, in which he was the hero of a film . . . this time he had rescued someone from a tremendous smashup . . . saw his own face magnified to fill a screen—his most sunburned face, streaked with oil and manly blood, the dark hair rumpled, the lips parted in a gasp for breath . . . slowly the face faded to be replaced by words, "CLOSE-UP OF LLOYD GOGUD AFTER RESCUE FROM SMASHED PLANE . . ."

The harsh voice of Prosper intruded upon his dream.

"Listen, Lloyd, it's the Scrag Bag's day for cleaning upstairs and she always fights with Gina over it. Like this," he thrust out his jaw and proceeded with expression and action to mimic their only domestic help, while Lloyd, dragged brutally from Hollywood, effaced his own reflection with the rag.

"It's the last time I do your work for you, Gina—the very last time I set foot on these boards," piped Prosper. "You Goguds are all alike. You wouldn't help a dying man, as the saying is. Selfish!—that's what you are, the whole lot of you. As for *you*, Gina, you're nothing but a little dictator. I'm telling you straight. You can take it or leave it."

"Go on, Pros!" Tacky applauded delightedly. "Do the bit about 'If you think I'm here to be bossed about by a chit of a girl'—"

" 'A chit of a girl,' " Pros continued, " 'not yet eight-

een, but who thinks she knows everything. Why, I'd as soon trust a platypus, as the saying is.' "

" 'I've slaved meself to a shadder,' " screamed Tacky, and the two boys concluded like a grand chorus, " 'AS THE SAYING IS! ' "

Fearing to encourage them, Lloyd worked on his bike without smiling. He knew the household depended upon the few hours of work Mrs. Scragby gave them in the mornings, when she cycled over from Sandy Cove bringing the mail and the daily paper. Though she irritated him at times to the point of fury, he was careful to keep on the right side of her, especially as he suspected his young brothers tormented her whenever they could—and he knew what *they* were like when they had their knife into anyone. Fortunately they were mostly at school when she came to Fipwood.

"I've got an idea," Pros announced. "Where does the old girl park her bike, Tacky?"

"Oh, no, you don't!" Lloyd threatened. "If you touch it, you'll never have a ride on mine again!" He looked only at Prosper, knowing him to be the ringleader. It was Prosper who had the ideas, while Tacky labored to carry them out.

"All right, Lloyd," Prosper bargained, "if I leave her bike alone, will you take me along the sands?"

Before there was time for a reply, a window overhead shot up with a bang, and Gina's head stuck out. "Why aren't you two boys chopping wood for the kitchen?" she demanded sharply.

"Cut it out," muttered Pros. "We know you are only sore because you've been told off yourself."

"Yes," supported Tacky, though not too loudly, "you needn't take it out on *us*."

It was Lloyd, looking up with his most charming smile, who called back, "Hello, Gina! Can you come down for a conference? There's something I specially want to ask you."

Her face cleared instantly. She smiled as she said, "About—?" and nodded to him. The window came down with another bang.



II

A Conference of Four

THE conference was held around the neglected chopping block in the yard, where the spring sunshine, reflected by the old stone walls, beat most warmly.

There was no one to overhear secrets, for Mrs. Scragby was still thumping around upstairs, and they knew their mother was in the kitchen canning gooseberries; yet they spoke in the low tones of conspirators, knowing that the information Lloyd and Tacky had stumbled on by a strange accident was very important indeed. They believed it could lead them to the exact spot where gold from a wreck was hidden.

This wreck of the *Rua Rua*, one of the last of the

regular sailing vessels to strike a rock off the Tasmanian coast, had caused much speculation at the time and for some years after; for, although a survivor had been rescued from an island, by the time a search was made the vessel had disappeared entirely. She was known to have carried bullion.

"We are now at the end of September," Lloyd began, as he opened the meeting, "which gives us just over two months till the summer holidays. We'll need all that time for our preparations, since I'm only home occasionally. There's a great deal to do. I've made some notes. One thing to look out for is a likely person to stay with Mother while we're gone."

"Someone who can milk a cow," put in Gina.

"With luck we might set off before Christmas. The real snag is—*how*?"

"You mean how do we get there?"

"I do, Pros. We can't just row up and down the coast, calling in at every likely island, can we?"

"We ought to get hold of a sailing boat, or borrow a motor boat."

"Don't be silly, Tacky. We've no cash, have we?" Lloyd sounded irritated. "We haven't ever sailed a boat, and people don't just *lend* their motor boats."

"We'll need something pretty large, won't we?" Gina suggested. "I mean, if we're taking food and camping things, as well as spades and shovels."

"And ropes for climbing the cliffs!" put in Tacky eagerly.

"And fishing lines—to help out food supplies," added Prosper.

"Pst!—lower!" warned Lloyd, and continued, "What would suit us exactly would be something like that little yacht that was up and down the coast last summer—remember?"

"*Ventura*?—but we don't know the fellow who sails her."

"No, we don't, Tacky—but the Swards do!"

"Well?"

"Well, we know *them*, don't we? That's what I want Gina to do. You still see a lot of Ernie Seward, don't you?" he asked, turning to her.

Gina smiled self-consciously at her fingernails. "Actually, I'll be seeing Ern this afternoon at tennis," she said.

"Well, then, ask him. I've found out that it's really owned by a Mr. Burlington who is a lawyer from Hobart, but he lets his son Jacko sail her. He's the big fellow—you've seen him about, haven't you?—studying law at the university, and a friend of Ernie's."

"I'll ask Ern," Gina agreed, "but I'll have to tell him what we want it for, and then of course he will want to come, too!"

"H'm." Lloyd frowned deeply. "Tell him it's just a fishing trip, and ask can this Jacko drop us on some island, and pick us up again a few days later?"

"But Ernie loves fishing," she objected.

"Then ask him!—but don't make too much of it. We

must hope they'll be too busy at Cottlestone, with Mr. Seward still in England, for him to get away."

"Mr. and Mrs. will be back with Barb some weeks before Christmas."

"I heard they changed their plans—Mr. Seward isn't flying back for the sheep shearing. They are all going to Italy or some such place instead."

"Who on earth told you all that, Lloyd? Well, actually, Ernie did mention a change of plan, but I didn't listen particularly because I'm sick of hearing about the wonderful doings of Barb—who ought still to be at school. She was full of herself before this trip—but now. . . !"

"Stick to the point!" Lloyd cried irritably. "You women never do! Will you see Ernie, then? If he can really arrange transportation for us I suppose he has to come along too, and be another to share in the loot. Don't *you* tell him this, though," he said hastily. "I'll put it to him at our next conference. All you have to do is *sound* him out, and if it seems satisfactory invite him along. Make it a Saturday, when he won't be working. Make it three weeks today, when I'll be home next. I suppose he's still got that little sports car to run over in?"

"You're behind the times, Lloyd," said Tacky. "Haven't you seen the new red affair?"

"Since the Swards are just about rolling in money," said Prosper slowly, "I can't see why Ernie has to have a share in ours."

"He may want to come just for the fun of the thing,"

said Gina, "but I say we should give him a share, even if it's a small one."

"Quite right, Gina—we will!" agreed Lloyd handsomely. "Old Ernie may be useful in other ways. Just bring him along to our next merry meeting. There's nothing more to discuss today. Keep your ears flapping, of course, for any information about Dr. Trivett and the chart—I mean the map he's supposed to have made of the island."

"What do you mean?" objected Prosper. "If he and Aunt Stella were in that London flat when a bomb got the whole outfit, how can there be any map?"

"Well, Huon wasn't in the flat, and if he happened to have—"

"Oh, yeah?" jeered Lloyd. "Our cousin Huon was six years old at the time. Would he be likely to carry maps around with him?—Have some sense!"

"Besides," Gina added, "Mum told me once that Huon was only saved because he was staying with some friends of Aunt Stella's called Writhen, who were living on a houseboat."

"Oh, all right! All right! But he wasn't their friend, he was their lawyer, so you don't know everything, Gina."

"Shut up and don't argue. The point is we must all keep our ears tuned for *any* information about those mysterious trips Dr. Trivett made in a boat with the old Dane. That's all." Lloyd stretched gracefully and his eyes turned toward his bike again.

“The point is,” said Gina, “since the conference is over, you two boys had better get the kitchen wood at once—or there’ll be trouble—won’t there, Lloyd?”

To their disgust she rose graciously from the chopping block, leaving it free for action.



III

A Houseboat on the Thames

LATE summer was already merging into autumn on the river Thames in England, on the Saturday the Goguds met in conference at Fipwood.

Instead of spring flowers, there had been a light mist over the water at sunrise, and though the sun in his power soon cleared it away a hint remained in the air and in the fading leaves of hurry—hurry—hurry—winter—is—coming. Even the thick, green grass on the banks had a jaded look as though it had seen too many picnic parties.

Yet the afternoon was glorious and the river as crowded as ever with such small craft as rowing boats,

punts, and canoes. Occasionally they had to give way to sailing dinghies, noisy river steamers with bands playing, or barges. There were swimmers in the water, too, and of course, idlers along the towpath.

Many of the spectators were returning to the green sward from the Chertsey reach downstream, where they had been watching an exciting race between dinghies of the local Sailing Club. The winning boat, old *Spurwing*, was also heading upstream to Laleham. The breeze had dropped, or what remained of it was swallowed by the willows at the bend, so she was being paddled against the sluggish current.

Spurwing's skipper, Huon Trivett, and his crew, Felicity, worked hard and spoke little. Both were wrapped in joy at finding themselves so unexpectedly first across the line and were trying not to appear too jubilant. When the houseboats came in sight, however, the limp sails filled and the *Spurwing* moved gently forward, the water gurgling against her smooth sides.

"We needn't work any more," said Huon, stowing his dripping paddle. "What's on your mind, Felicity? Your funny eyebrows have been wobbling up and down. Sure sign you mean to scold me about something."

"They aren't!—I'm not! Oh, Hu!—how could I scold you when you've just won the cup?"

"Don't bring that in. There is something . . . is it to make a condition before you'll crew me at Ranelagh?"

"No, of course not!" She turned, busying herself with the jib to hide her face. She had in fact been wondering

how, without hurting his feelings, she could introduce the subject of school. Others did this sort of thing so lightly—why did she herself find it so agonizing to talk about things that mattered, to anyone like Hu? Why couldn't she now throw out casually, "I hear you've cast off the chains, Hu. Given school away, haven't you? I suppose you'll be going back to Tasmania soon?"

She drew a deep breath, her delicate eyebrows curved still higher from her anguished gray eyes as she made the effort—only to find she had blurted out quite the wrong words. "What happened, Hu? Why aren't you going back to school again?"

"Oh—that!" he laughed lightly. "Sorry I forgot to mention it, but we've been so busy getting ready for the race. It's only that school decided it wasn't worth my while going on any more, seeing as I've no gray matter under my hair."

"You've got lots of brains, Hu."

"Thanks, Felicity, but no one else agrees with you—not even me! I can do things like sailing, or painting a boat—things I like—but nothing else. And I can't pass exams. It's just like that."

Felicity, who was aching inside for him, could only stare ahead blankly and gaze with unseeing eyes at the merry crowds around the river's edge.

"Also," continued Huon, "Mark says the cash is running out. It seems Father hoped I'd be a doctor like him and wanted me to go to his old school, but his investments went down after the war and now there's

almost nothing left. If I'd been bright, something might have been wangled; as it is, there's no choice."

"But what are you going to do?"

"That, as Mr. Shakespeare remarked, is the question. Or will be, when the sailing season is over. I refuse to think about it till then, Fil. Now, about Ranelagh. With a breeze like today we might do some good. Could you come down there with me one day for a practice?"

They were still talking about Ranelagh when they drew level with the houseboat *Water Vole*, Hu's home. He peered through the glass windows of the cabin as they passed. "There seems to be no one there; I wonder where Mark and Phoebe have gone."

"I see them!" cried Felicity. "They're on the towpath side, talking to some people. You seem to be having visitors."

"Oh, blast visitors! I won't look around or Mark will want to know who won the race. Who are the people, Felicity?"

"I've never seen them before. Both Mr. and Mrs. Writhen are there with the small boat. Didn't you expect anyone?"

"I heard nothing about it. What are they like?"

"The man is rather big; he makes Mr. Writhen look short beside him."

"D'you mean the man is fat?"

"No, not exactly fat—just big. His laugh is big, too—did you hear it just then? He seems middle-aged, with

rather a sunburned, red face—and that's all I can see. The girl," she added casually, "is rather pretty."

"Girl!—what girl? You concealed her from me, Felicity!—and I can't see her now."

"No; Mark is ferrying them over."

"Description of girl: height, color of eyes, type of hair, shape of nose—instantly, please!"

"Don't be silly," she laughed. "I believe you expected them all the time! She's rather big, too. I suppose she's his daughter. Very smartly dressed—yes, you know her, it's no good pretending you don't."

"Ah! I soon will, anyway. Tell them I won't be staying for tea at the club."

They sparred for a while as they made for the boat-house; then abruptly his crew asked the question that was burning in her mind. "Will you go back to Tasmania now? That's where your people are, isn't it?"

"Tasmania? No!—Oh, I have an aunt there, Aunt Myrtle—that's all. She's a widow with four children, so they're my cousins, but I'm awfully bad at writing letters and I don't know much about any of them. Only that they live at Fipwood, a house in the country where Mother was born. They haven't asked me to visit them. Come to that, there are a good many relatives scattered round England I've never seen. Old as the hills, most of them. What gave you this idea, Felicity?"

"Only I was wondering what you'd like to do best."

Huon pondered, looking back down the reach to where the lowering sun touched up the windows of the

Water Vole, making them look afire. "I'd like best just to stay and look after Mark's boat for him . . . and pick up some painting jobs in the spring . . . and sail and sail and sail all the summer . . ." He paused and sighed.

"Well?" she prompted.

"But I know good old Mark will have ideas for me."

"Ideas like what, Hu?"

"Ideas like—farming."

Felicity pulled in her jib: they were nearly in. The noise of the crowd had grown less, people were leaving the bank in search of tea. She looked up at a sudden sound; two great white swans were passing overhead with necks held stiff and straight. They seemed barely to clear *Spurwing's* mast as they followed downstream with a strange creaking of their wings.

As they watched them out of sight, she said, "Those wings need oiling. Don't you want to farm, Hu?"

"I don't want to do anything that takes me from the river," he answered simply.



IV

A Generous Offer

MARK WRITTHEN, both friend and unofficial guardian as well as Huon's lawyer, failed to notice *Spurwing* pass him on the crowded river.

He and his wife, Phoebe, had been much too interested in the strangers who had hailed *Water Vole* to remember the sailing race.

"Mr. Seward!" exclaimed Phoebe, when he had introduced himself and his daughter Barbara on the tow-path bank. "Of course—you're from Tasmania, aren't you? I remember Huon's mother speaking of you years ago—Stella Trivett. Have you come to see Huon?"

"That's correct." The big man smiled in deep ap-

preciation both of her charming self and her memory, and in his full, slow speech told them he had come just as much to meet *them*, to thank them for what they had done for a young Tasmanian, the son of an old friend and neighbor.

"I determined to look the boy up when I was over here," he boomed, "but—like many things I intended to do—it almost got left too late. It was Barb here who fixed it; though the traffic out of London nearly beat us and we can only stay an hour."

On the way to the houseboat, as Mark rowed them over, he explained that his vacation in England was almost ended; that he would be leaving with Barbara and her mother in two days' time for Paris. "And after Paris, across Europe, before we pick up the liner for home. I didn't plan it like this, Mr. Writthen," he sighed. "I arranged to fly home next week, and get back for the shearing, leaving the family to take their time seeing Italy. I thought they could pick up the boat at Genoa without me. But you know how it is."

"We got around him," said Barbara happily. "We made him come, too! Mum doesn't like going places on her own. Is this your houseboat? It does look like fun! Where's Huon?"

They explained about the sailing race, and scanned the white sails, now numerous about them, for *Spurwing*. "He doesn't seem to be with the rest—may have capsized or run into the reeds," said Mark, and hailed the nearest pair in a dinghy, to inquire.

"*Spurwing* was first over the line! Huon won the cup!" they called back. Recovering from his astonishment, Mark asked them to tell Huon to come to the houseboat as soon as possible, and took his guests aboard.

They were delighted with the novelty of a floating home—complete even to electricity and a telephone—which rocked gently to the wash of every passing steamer. Barbara was especially fascinated by the life of the river; she kept rushing to the great glass windows of the cabin, or out on deck, fearful of missing some strange sight. All the time she kept up a flow of lively chatter.

"Oh, look! A swan!—two swans—two swans and some young ones!"

"Well, Barb," protested her father, comfortably settled on deck, "we've plenty of swans in Australia, haven't we?—only ours are black."

"That's just it, Dad! These are *white*! Oh, look, what's that? A punt? Yes, a punt—I know it is! I've seen girls in films leaning back in one of those with sunshades, while a young man poked it along with a thing like a pole. Then the pole gets stuck in the mud and the fellow is left clinging to it while the punt drifts away, and he stays in the air like a monkey on a stick, till it falls in the water and he comes out with his pants all muddy! Do you have a punt, Mrs. Writhen? Would Huon take me out in it?"

"Yes, we have a punt," Phoebe laughed. "It's there, moored alongside *Water Vole*, and I'm sure Huon would

love to take you out, if you have time. But don't expect anything sensational to happen! The river has a gravel bed here, not mud, and in any case Huon is much too expert with a punt pole to do any monkey-on-a-stick antics." A slight sound made her glance toward the gangway and she added, "Aren't you, Hu?"

Mr. Seward's shrewd eyes were already taking in the rather short, strongly built figure with the wide shoulders, and noting his springing step: by the time introductions were over he knew quite a lot about Huon Trivett.

Barbara, of course, insisted upon going out in the punt at once, without waiting for tea, and arranged herself elegantly, reclining on the cushions, before Huon had time to pick up the pole.

"I give you twenty minutes—no more!" said her father as they moved out into the stream. He watched them for a minute, then glanced at his watch and turned to his hosts with a number of questions about Huon's schooling and his future plans. At Mark's replies he nodded thoughtfully.

"When I got your address from his aunt, Myrtle Gogud," he said at last, "she suggested he might like to visit them at Fipwood one day. Rather a vague invitation," he continued with a laugh, "but perhaps you know she is rather a vague lady? No doubt she would love to see her nephew, but I think I should warn you he couldn't learn anything about sheep there, for they've sold nearly all the land."

"Don't they farm at all, then?" Mark asked.

"No—unless it's a few oats for the old horse they still keep—and now I've seen Huon, I rather doubt whether he would fit into that household for long." He paused and his eyes traveled over the gay crowds and the deftly managed boats, and the orderliness of the river, so well controlled even in floodtime.

"Tell us about his cousins," prompted Phoebe.

"They are all much too good-looking, in my opinion. What I mean is—they know it, or at least Lloyd, the eldest, does. I haven't seen much of the two younger boys, but I'm told they are spoiled young devils. The girl, Gina, is certainly easy on the eyes. I think she does more than her mother to keep things together, but the truth is, even before their father died, all the children were allowed to have things too much as they liked. Raymond Gogud was a man who was always away, taking up some wonderful new idea for making his fortune, and selling his land to raise the necessary capital, instead of realizing that his fortune lay *in* the land. Lloyd seems to me to have the same sort of instability, but I may be wrong."

"Thank you for speaking frankly," said Phoebe with a sigh. "We want to do our best for Huon even if we have to lose him—and I don't know how we should look after the houseboat without him, do you, Mark?"

"No, but the time has come when he must get his teeth into a real job. I always thought, Mr. Seward, he would return to the place where he was born, eventually, and it would provide him with a living on the land.

He hasn't shown much interest, but it should be in his blood."

"Exactly what I've been thinking. In fact, I'll come straight to the point. I like the look of him—he seems a worker, and I don't give two hoots for his failure to pass school exams. If you'd like to send him to us at Cottlestone—and he is willing—I'll take him on as jack-aroo."

"Is that an apprentice to farming?"

"To sheep farming. Yes, I'll take him on for a couple of years and see how he shapes. It's not a thing I usually do; it seldom works with anyone not born in Tas—but I'm forgetting, he *is* Tasmanian born. He won't earn much at first, but he won't have many expenses. He'll be treated like my two boys and be one of the family. As a matter of fact, my eldest boy, Neal, is engaged, so I'll be losing his help before long. He's more or less running the place for me while I'm away."

They fell to discussing details, and Mark inquired about the cost of a passage to Australia, explaining that there was not much money available for Huon's use.

"My offer included paying his passage out," said Mr. Seward quietly. "My idea is, if he comes to us, to let him have my plane reservation. I don't like canceling it after it has been held for me so long. It will mean he must leave in five days' time, though."

"But you won't be back yourself, by then?"

"No, Mrs. Writhen, not for some time after that; and I'd rather not complicate things for Neal by sending

Huon straight to Cottlestone. What I had in mind was, to cable to the Goguds, and see if his aunt would like him just for a visit until we get back. What do you yourself think of the whole scheme?"

Before Mark could do more than express wholehearted approval, the punt was seen to be returning.

"Good, he's punctual," said Mr. Seward. "Just one thing more. Please don't mention this scheme until after I've gone. Lunch with me in London on Monday—we don't leave till the evening—and tell me then what he decides. I should have the answer to my cable to his aunt by that time, and will be all ready with the tickets for him if he's going. Not another word about it," he said hastily, as Phoebe was about to thank him. "Here they are at the houseboat!" Raising his voice he called, "Well, Barb, I suppose now you want to buy a punt!"



V

"Have You a Chart?"

L ANGUIDLY reclining on her cushions, the fingers of one fat hand dabbling the water, Barbara waited till they were out of earshot of *Water Vole* before speaking to Huon. Then she suggested, "Couldn't you give one big shove and then sit down? I've got something to ask you, and I can't talk privately with you standing up there and waving that thing around."

Smiling down at her dimpled impudence he obeyed instructions, gave a last powerful thrust, shipped his pole and came to sit beside her. Twilight was gathering and a faint blue mist was creeping over the water, while

most other small craft had disappeared from the lower reaches. It was safe enough to let the punt drift gently with the current toward Chertsey.

"Go ahead. You sound mysterious. What is it?" he asked her.

"It's only this: I had a letter from—from a friend of mine, but I didn't tell Dad because he doesn't like me seeing much of him. He wants to know if you happen to have a chart anywhere about."

"A chart? What sort of a chart?"

"It's one your father, Dr. Trivett, made of an island. Did you know, when he had a practice near the east coast of Tasmania, he was always going off in a small boat, exploring?"

Huon stared at her. "My father?" he repeated. "No, how should I? I know so little about him. You see I was only six when—"

"—Yes, I know!" she broke in. "I know about that. I'm awfully sorry. I only asked because my friend specially wanted me to find out. I don't suppose there ever was a map of this particular island, but I promised I'd ask you. Now I have!"

"Sorry I can't help. What does he want it for?"

"Well . . . well, actually he said not to mention it; but if I tell you, you will know what to look for, won't you? It's the island where the old *Rua Rua* was wrecked. Oh, you don't know about that, do you? It was ages ago when ships carried gold, and she went down with bags of it and they don't know exactly where."

"This sounds like an adventure story! Is your friend going to start salvage operations?"

"No, no!—it's not that. Look, I'd better tell you—there was one survivor, a young fellow who moved a lot of the gold to a safe hiding place before he was rescued. He was half dead by that time, and when the small boat that took him off went back with others, the wreck had disappeared in a storm. Or else they couldn't find the island again!"

"And what happened to the young sailor?"

"He's old now, a real ancient mariner. He may have told your father about the island, because Dr. Trivett helped him when he was sick one time, they say, but he never got there again. He's given the clues, though, to—to my friend. So he doesn't really need the chart, but if you had noticed it about . . ."

"I'll ask Mark for you, but as far as I know there was nothing rescued of my father's. We must turn back now," he continued, "or we'll be late."

As the punt pole clicked rhythmically on the gravel and they swung toward the houseboat, Huon said, "Tell me about Tasmania."

"Don't you remember anything?"

"Yes, I distinctly remember licking an ice-cream cone on a boat with sea gulls all around, and land whichever way I looked."

"Was it a large boat?"

"I seem to think it was."

"I expect that's only because you were small yourself."

It sounds to me as though you were on a ferry steamer, crossing from Hobart to Bellerive."

"Perhaps I was," Huon agreed a little absently. "Who did you say made that map—my father or the sailor?"

"I think it was Dr. Trivett, but it doesn't matter, does it? It's lost now."

He nodded, his gaze upstream. With the failing light the river by Laleham ferry was changing to a vast, tree-shadowed lake, with one wavering, gold path where the light from some uncurtained window ran into the water. This was the time and the scene he loved, when the people on the banks had disappeared, leaving the Thames to those who belonged to it.

He belonged. What did the Water Rat say in *The Wind in the Willows*? "It's my world and I don't want any other. What it hasn't got is not worth having, and what it doesn't know is not worth knowing. Lord! The times we've had together!"

With a strong thrust he sent the punt gliding forward just as Mr. Seward's booming voice hailed them from the houseboat.

It was not until they were on the towpath gathered round the car to say good-by that Huon got in a word to Mark as he had promised.

"A map? No, there was nothing saved, I'm afraid; all we have at the office are a few papers and documents of your father's, and—yes, a little pigskin diary he kept. I mentioned it to you once. Now I come to think of it,

I believe I noticed a map inside. I'll get it on Monday for you, if you like."

"What's this?" said Mr. Seward. "Monday? I gave you the hotel, didn't I?—say a quarter to one? If that suits you. And now, Barb, get in. We'll be seeing Huon in Tasmania one day, won't we, Hu?"

"Of course we will," dimpled Barbara.

"I'll look in when passing." Hu grinned back at her.

When Huon was given Mark's urgent message to come to *Water Vole*, he had left Felicity stowing away the sailing gear in the shed, and fully intended to return as soon as possible. But, when the visitors had departed, Mark gave him news that forced him for the first time in his life, to make a big decision—and to make it quickly.

For a time he sat with Mark and Phoebe in the cabin, talking things over. Then abruptly he stood up. "I've got to go to the boathouse," he said.

"That's right, don't rush your fences. There is nothing harder than making a decision. Think it over."

"I have thought. Thanks, Mark—I'll go, of course."

"No, no! Think it over carefully!"

For answer he smiled at them both, turned quickly, sprang lightly across the gangway, and was away.

It was dark along the tree-shaded path to the boat-house and when he got there everything was locked up and everyone had gone. He perched on a chock on the bank with his back against *Spurwing* and stared at the

inky water and the paths of golden light crossing it, thinking. But he did not change his mind.

All Sunday he hoped Felicity would come to the river, but he did not see her again until Monday, after Mark and Phoebe had returned from London and taken the punt out to free themselves of city phobia. Then she arrived with eyebrows flickering, indignant at his treatment of her on Saturday after the race, and saying so in no uncertain terms.

"I didn't mind putting the things away, but to have to receive the cup for you!—and all the time you were out on the river punting that girl about—I saw you! Well, don't ask me to crew you at Ranelagh—because I won't."

"All right, then. I won't ask you," he replied evenly, picking up with great calm a book with a leather cover from his knees, and turning the pages. He was alert enough, however, to dodge the cushion aimed at his head; it fell in the water.

"Oh, Hu! Quick, help me fish it out. It's one of their best ones!"

"Can you reach it? Don't slip. Here, I'll hold your ankles." With his aid, the soggy, heavy lump was hauled on deck again.

As she dried her arms with a handkerchief, Felicity conceded, "All right then, Huon,—since you helped me, I will crew for you, after all."

He spoke without looking up, "No thanks. Not wanted."

She stared at him, looking as though she had been struck; then, trying to sound casual instead of stunned, said, "Good! . . . Got someone else?"

"There are girls in the world who wouldn't make a fuss without knowing the reason—" he paused, stealing a glance at her face, and suddenly relented,—“but as a matter of fact, Fil, I can't ask you to crew for me because I won't be here."

"Oh!" she let out an unguarded sigh of relief. "Why not? Where will you be, Hu?"

"I shall be about twelve thousand miles away, on an island called Tasmania, which is part of Australia, not New Zealand as you probably imagine."

"Hu!" she gasped, "you are going home! But why? What will you do there?"

"Here's another surprise for you"—he tapped the open page—"I shall dig up gold, bags and bags of it. A ship wrecked itself thoughtfully on an island that has been mapped for me here—in this diary my father kept. See? . . . It seems incomplete, though; not the map—I mean the description, which breaks off on the last page in the middle of a sentence. Listen!"

His eyes on the fine, neat handwriting, Huon read aloud: "Climbed on top by the cliff path, if it can be called a path, to view the whole island. Everything is there—in miniature. To the west a well-shaped baby mountain clothed in a miniature forest of eucalypts; for the rest a valley-like depression of great loveliness, green and full of wild flowers. Through this basin a tiny

stream threads its way in a series of rock pools of good, clear water. This stream, such as it is, must lose itself down the limestone ravine I noted the first day, so I returned to explore further. I scarcely expected to find treasure, but looking up, saw what was hidden in the cleft! A fortune for the brave, but have I the courage—”

“Go on, Hu!”

“That’s the end of the page, and there are no more. The last word is *courage*.”

“A bit must be missing. Why ‘courage’? Would poisonous snakes be coiled round the money bags, or what? Oh, never mind the treasure island stuff! Be serious. You aren’t really going away, are you?”

“Of course I am. I must go.”

“Why?—because the girl who came here wants you to join in some harebrained hunt?”

“No, Barbara Seward told me about it, but she didn’t suggest I should join the hunt. She just wanted the map.” He paused a moment, and his tone altered. “I’m really going, Fil, because I’ve been in Mark’s houseboat long enough on the dole, and there’s a job offering—to learn sheep farming out there. I can’t turn it down.”

“You said you didn’t want to farm!” she cried hotly. “Why do you do it, Hu? Why do you always let other people push you around? You won’t get anywhere that way!”

For a long moment they looked at each other silently; then Felicity dropped her eyes before his. “You see,” he told her gently, as though concluding a long argu-

ment, "there isn't any opening for me here." Closing the small book, he slipped it in his pocket and looked upstream before he spoke again. "Here comes Mark, . . . I've been thinking, Felicity. Will you take over *Spurwing* and sail her for me, while I'm away?"

"Oh, Hu! . . . I . . ." Her breathless protests died away as again their eyes met shyly.

"That's fixed, then. Good!" Rumpling his hair with an embarrassed gesture, he asked her suddenly, "If you can't afford to do what you want, don't you have to take any old job that offers?"

She considered a moment, but held her ground. "No. Well, at first, perhaps, as a means to an end. But if you find what it is you want to do—then do it! Give yourself the last word . . . I . . . I can't explain."

"The last word?" He slapped the pocket of his coat and laughed. "The last word is *courage*. Remember?" And he sprang forward to fend off the punt.



VI

Unpleasant News

AT Fipwood there is a space of wasteland between the pine trees and the cliffs, with a small, grassy hollow, sheltered from the wind. Here Gina and Lloyd were waiting for Ernest Seward on the day appointed for their conference. The two younger boys had wandered off; they were supposed to be watching for him to appear up the steep cliff path known as the Scramble.

"Before he comes," Lloyd was saying, "I want this clear, Gina. We won't include Ernie unless he can help about the Burlington's yacht, because we don't want a whole crowd with us."

"Ernie isn't a whole crowd, and anyhow, Lloyd, you

said—" she checked herself abruptly as Ernest's head shot suddenly into view.

"Hullo!" he greeted them cheerily, "hatching plots?"

"Hullo, Ern," Lloyd said, getting up languidly, "our two sentries seem to have fallen down on their job. I'll fetch them."

Ernest came forward, looking, beside the two Goguds, like a cart horse among thoroughbreds. Gina patted the grass beside her and he sat down to discuss tennis.

"Listen, Ernie," she interrupted, as Lloyd was seen returning after shouting to Prosper and Tacky, "something's happened since I saw you last. That sister of yours, Barb, seems to have gone and messed things up properly."

"What do you mean, Gina?" Lloyd, overhearing, interrupted her. "Barb's all right. As a matter of fact, I asked her to see Huon. I want to know if Dr. Trivett really did make a map of the island or not. It's a thing we should know."

Gina stared at him; she could understand any girl admiring Lloyd, but that he should see anything in that great silly Barbara . . . !

"What's the odds, Gina?" Ernest laughed lightly. "Why shouldn't Barb ask this chap Huon if he's got a map, if Lloyd wants to check with his own information?"

"Because we don't want him in it too, Ernie."

"Well, but if he's got a map all he has to do is mail it

out. He doesn't have to post himself with it, does he?" He laughed.

There was a frozen silence from the others for a moment, then Gina burst out, "But that's just what he *is* doing! That's why I said Barb had messed things up! Mum had a cable from your father to ask if we'd have him to stay at Fipwood! It's a put-up job, can't you see? We can all guess what Huon is after, and," she wailed, "he'd never have known about the map if Barb hadn't told him!"

"Oh, don't make such a fuss, Gina," cried Lloyd impatiently. "I knew what I was doing. Ernie's quite right. The fellow can't get here in five minutes. It's a month by ship and then he will probably wait months for a passage, by which time the Christmas holidays will have come and gone. I promise you," he added with a smile, "that I'm not taking him, too! And now, Ernie, for the important thing. What about this friend of yours and his yacht? Will he take us, do you think?"

"Yes, Lloyd. I had a talk to Jacko on the phone and sounded him. He said he liked messing around islands after crayfish. He was quite willing, but he asked a lot of questions—like lawyers do—ones I couldn't answer. How long would you be away? Who would be in the party? And, exactly where were you intending to land?"

Lloyd sat up and swept his hair back with a gesture. "Ernest," he stated impressively, "you are one of us! We are all agreed that if you arrange the transportation for us you can come, too. The exact place we aim for must

remain a secret till we actually sail, but you can tell him it's an island off this coast. Now for your own information—how much do you already know of the scheme?"

"Not a lot, really. They are saying down at Sandy Cove that the old Dane, Olaf the boatbuilder, has been talking again about some old wreck. Did he let on to you where it was? I've seen his little hut behind the sand dunes, and talked to him often enough, but he never said anything to me except about fishing."

"He doesn't say much unless he's very sick, and then it's in a jaw-cracking lingo. We were lucky, weren't we, Tacky? I'll tell you what happened, Ern. We were out with flashlights, flounder-spearing along that lonely stretch of beach in front of the dunes. It was quite dark; there was no moon and a lot of cloud. Suddenly I noticed something moving, and my light flashed around. I waded ashore to the sound of groans, and there was the old man breathing hard and writhing about on the sands. It was rather spooky and at first we thought he was dying, didn't we, Tacky? But then he started to talk."

"De gol'! De gol' from de wreck!" Tacky aped in illustration.

"He seemed to think I was Dr. Trivett, a sort of uncle of ours who was killed by a bomb at the beginning of the war. He raved that I'd saved his life, didn't he, Tacky?"

"He did. He jabbered, 'all de gol' from de wreck iss for you, doctor!'"

"By gum, did he say just where it was?"

"He did, Ernie, but before he mentioned the *Rua Rua* he threw a kind of fit, so Tacky took the hurricane lamp and ran off to the Cove to fetch help."

"But I could hear him shouting, 'De goll! . . . de gol from de wreck iss for you,' halfway to the Cove," said Tacky.

"Of course," Lloyd continued, "I had the whole story out of him before Tacky returned with the crowd. He went sort of unconscious then, and they had to take him off on a stretcher. But he'd already told me the spot where it was hidden."

"Then—I don't understand"—Ernest wrinkled his brows in perplexity—"why did you ask the cousin in England for a map?"

All eyes turned to Lloyd, who hesitated; at last his words came with a rush. "Because, all of you, though he told me where the gold was hidden, he wasn't so clear which island it was on. There seem to have been dozens round the coast that have had wrecks."

"Didn't he drop any clues?" asked Prosper, after a short silence.

"Of course he did! In fact, I don't really need to worry, he mentioned a certain . . . er . . . natural feature, so that I'll know it at once when I see the island. With a map I could tell at a glance. But I don't want to waste valuable time landing on this island, and looking at that one. See what I mean?"

"Of course you don't!" agreed Ernie heartily. "I

suggest you call around to see old Olaf again, and ask him straight out which it is. He's still in hospital, isn't he?"

"I can't, Ern; it's hard to explain, but after they took him to hospital he—he seemed to forget I had . . . er . . . saved his life. In fact, he's taken a real hate to me! When I go there he glares and jabbers, till some officious nurse tells me to go away, because I excite him. I shall go on trying, of course, but—"

"I wouldn't waste more time on him, then. Just get the map from England!"

"But don't you see, Ern," said Tacky, "we don't want to bring in this cousin, too?"

"There mightn't be as much gold as Lloyd thinks," Prosper supported him, "and there are us five to share it up for a start. This Jacko, too, I suppose? If he takes us there? Six! If we have to have Huon because of his map, and your sister Barb, because she asked him for it—"

"Oh, *she* doesn't need to come," said Gina firmly.

"She's coming, anyway," stated Lloyd with a cold glance in Gina's direction. There was a long, awkward pause, until Ernest, in his blundering way, said not to worry about Barb, he didn't think his parents would allow her to join them. Lloyd said nothing, but smiled in a manner that suggested he knew better.

"I can hear Mum, Tacky," said Prosper. "Better hop back and see what she wants. She's by the door, waving something in her hand."

"I must go," said Gina without moving.

"I know," said Prosper to Lloyd. "Write and offer to pay Huon for his map, and put it down to expenses, to be shared by all."

"I haven't a spare pound, and I see no reason to give him one, if I had. He can't go treasure-hunting on his own and in any case he won't be here. Look, Tacky seems in a hurry!"

Before he actually reached the group, Tacky was calling out, and bursting with his news. "Hoy, all of you! Mum's had a telegram! . . . from our English cousin . . . Huon, yes! . . . He's *here!* He's in Australia!"

"He can't be actually here. It's less than a month—"

"He is, I tell you! He's in Sydney now and will be in Tasmania tomorrow! Aren't we all owls?" he panted. "He *flew* from England!"

There was an expressive, "Gosh!," and a slightly awed silence from the rest, while Tacky told the details. "He's catching the service bus and will be at the usual road-stop in the afternoon. You've got to take Brownie and the sulky to meet him, Gina. Mum says fetch old Brownie in now from the top paddock and spruce her up. Someone's got to rub up the harness, too, but it won't be me, because—"

"Go and get on with it, you and Pros," ordered Lloyd. "Evidently he's to be received in style. Must be rolling in wealth," he added, "so why should he need the map?"

"Say we charge him a hundred pounds to join us?" suggested Tacky.

"Have some sense!"

Gina got up and brushed grass stalks from her skirt. "These millionaires make me sick. Let him keep out of it, I say! And he can keep his old map. 'By, Ernie. See you later." She stalked away with a toss of her curls, and the conference broke up, with Lloyd moaning that he must leave before Huon Trivett was due to arrive.

"I'd like to have a look at him, but exams are coming on, and I may not get home again for some weeks," he told Ernest, as he went with him to inspect the new red sports car.



VII

A New World

HUON lived at full pressure from the moment he told Felicity his decision. He had feverish days in London acquiring a passport, getting inoculated against various diseases, buying things. Then there were crowded days on the houseboat, sorting things out, packing, and seeing people.

At last he was actually at the airport, awaiting the departure of the great liner for Australia, but by then in such a state inwardly that nothing seemed quite real.

His Sailing Club friends, who had come in great force to see him off, seemed most unreal in conventional town

clothes; and the school friend from Devon, familiar during vacation time in an old hat draped with a bee veil, was laughable in a proper hat. Mark and Phoebe, and Felicity, too, made jocular remarks to hide their emotion. Their words were hilarious, but their eyes said something else . . .

They all piled gifts on him, envied him in excited voices for traveling by air, for his chance to see the world, for flying into summer and leaving the English winter behind. Of course he laughed and joked back, saying he was only going so that someone else might have a chance to win the sailing prizes.

At the last his eyes sought Felicity and stayed there till only her green dress was visible.

He was still looking back when even the green of England was lost in mist.

The wonders of air travel over vast regions, the glimpses of strange, foreign places, came to Huon with the same sense of unreality. Perhaps he was too tired to appreciate it as he would have liked—tired in his mind, not physically, tired from making a decision.

His journey ended in Sydney, where by great good luck he was able to transfer at once to a seaplane leaving for Tasmania. In a matter of hours he had reached Hobart—was coming down between the mountains to settle on the estuary of the Derwent.

From the moment he stepped ashore he felt things settling into place more sanely, and drew long breaths

of air rich with a scent of eucalypts that stirred him strangely.

The drive up the east coast was leisurely. There was no one to meet him; he was left to wait by the roadside between paddocks of rough pasture that stretched away to distant, bush-covered hills on his left, and a dim line, that was the sea on the other side. Sunshine enfolded the land, and the sky was all blue.

For a time Huon walked about restlessly, wondering if his telegram had reached Fipwood, and if they were coming to meet him as arranged. Then he sat on the dusty grass, his back against a fence post, and amused himself working out little sums to see how many hundreds of miles he could have traveled, how many new countries have seen from the air, in the time he was wasting. Yet, was time only well spent when a person was on the move? he wondered.

The road shimmered in the sunshine and little traffic went past. His eyes searched the distance: nowhere did he see movement, except the white flick of a rabbit's scut and the slow quartering of a hawk above the pasture.

He sniffed the air again and something came back to him from childhood; suddenly he felt happy in the fine spaciousness, the limitless blue sky, and the white road meandering to the far hills. Its stillness was balm to his spirit.

The good warmth on his hair reminded Huon that this was the month of October—autumn by the Thames! He stretched out, his head cradled on his arm, his

thoughts drifting about the world. Several times he told himself he must keep awake and listen for the Goguds' car; once he started up as a truck rattled by, but in the end he slept.

The iron-bound wheels of the sulky grated on the road as Brownie clumped along in her own good time. Gina saw the pile of luggage before she noticed the sleeping Huon, and pulled up short.

From her hot leather seat she gazed down at him in amazement, for here was everything her mind had *not* pictured. She had expected the wealthy English boy who couldn't wait for a boat, but dashed across the world by plane, to look the part. He should have been tall and fair, smartly dressed, and very well groomed. He should have been standing, smoking rather languidly, beside an immaculate suitcase; he might even have been wearing gloves. At the sight of her—ah, she had planned just how the conversation would go—he would have found it didn't pay to be superior with *her*!

But this! What could she make of this Huon who looked younger than he was, had skin as brown as a nut, a snub nose, and great, wide shoulders? She stared at his tweed coat and the old, patched knapsack affair propped against a worn suitcase of leather, and sighed deeply. The cousin she had pictured was at least a useful escort to tennis. For this boy she would never have put on her best frock, or worked so hard all the morning . . .

Huon woke in much confusion, struggling to hold

a dream no less fantastic than reality, and saw a pretty girl in a sort of dog cart looking at him rather disdainfully and asking, "Are you Huon Trivett?"

Realizing suddenly where he was, he sprang up, smiling, "Yes! And of course you must be Gina."

"Better get in," she said quickly. "Brownie won't stand once her head is turned for home."

Conversation did not progress very well. Gina seemed intent on urging something better than a languid trot out of Brownie, which she did by occasional wallops with the end of the reins. This disturbed from Brownie's ungroomed coat a cloud of dust and hair that blew straight in their faces. Hu found he needed one hand to remove odd hairs from his mouth and the other to keep himself from slipping off the seat.

"What are you like at tennis?" Gina asked after a time.

"Tennis? I'm afraid I don't play."

"You don't play?" She stared at him, amazed. "Do you mean you never learned?"

"Oh, no. I just didn't take it up." Some more of Brownie's hairs prevented him from adding that he was more interested in water sports.

For Gina this was almost the last straw. From early morning the day had gone all wrong. She had had a fuss with Mrs. Scragby and had to clean the spare room herself in consequence. The oven had been too hot for the meringues, and not hot enough for the cream cake Mum demanded in Huon's honor. Brownie had broken

a piece of harness and made her late. Was all this for a kid who couldn't even give her a game of tennis? Well, Mum could have him! The sooner she got him home to Fipwood the better.

"Do you know the time?" she asked.

"Ten past four, if my watch is right. It's been changed about so much lately—" Huon paused, wondering if she was meaning to apologize for arriving late, and added, "I didn't mind waiting in the least; you know everything's been a bit hectic lately. Not that I meant to fall asleep. I really thought I was listening for your car!"

"Car?" She picked him up sharply. "What car? We've always liked horses better than cars at Fipwood. Except of course," she added hastily, "Lloyd has a motor bike."

Huon stared at the profile beside him, amazed more by the unfriendly tone than the actual words. With jarring words and a slap of the reins she urged Brownie on, managing to look both pretty and bad tempered at the same time. The conversation wilted.

A turn of the road brought into view a wide bay of limpid blue with rugged islands to set it off, and Huon gave a gasp of pleasure. "I say! Those islands are fine! I do like craggy peaks sticking up out of the sea. What's the name of that one over there?"

"That's Schouten."

"It's grand. I expected something quite different—a lot of round, hummocky little islands . . ."

"What do you mean 'expected'? Why did you 'expect' islands?"

"Oh, not much brain power required." He laughed. "Wasn't there a celebrated wreck off one of those?"

"I see," said Gina slowly. "Barb Seward has told you that Lloyd—"

"She never mentioned Lloyd," he interrupted quickly, "but it's true, isn't it, that a treasure hunt is planned? All that's wanted is a map, isn't it, that my father made? I thought you only needed that to—"

"Needed it? Of course not! Whatever Barb tells you, we don't need any old map of yours. I suppose you thought we were just waiting for you to arrive with it, did you? Well, whatever Barb Seward says—" with an effort she bit back speech and leaning forward, walloped Brownie instead. The subject was not mentioned again between them.

As the sulky bumped along the road Huon kept his eyes on the passing scenery, while Gina, longing to be alone for the relief of tears, thought bitterly of Barbara Seward, who had not only got around her adored brother Lloyd, but had evidently said too much to this cousin. She hoped she had made it clear to him that his map was no big stick he could wave over their heads in order to get what he wanted.

She made an effort, when they came in sight of the house, to point it out to him, and to tell him something of the history of Fipwood. A good deal of its history

could be read from the massive gateway and the broken-down gates leading to the neglected drive, but this Gina did not realize.

"There's Mum—waiting for you on the terrace!" She pulled up and suggested helpfully he should go to meet Mum. "I'll take Brownie out; you can collect your stuff later," she said in much more friendly tones.

Huon had an odd, choking sort of feeling as he ran toward a slim little lady, standing with great dignity by a broken stone balustrade, and knew he was seeing a sister of the mother he could scarcely remember.

She greeted him with both hands outstretched, held him by the shoulders for a long moment while she stared intently at his face, then gave him a little shake and released him. "Of course you are like her," she said. "You were as a child, Huon." Then she laughed quickly, to brush sentiment aside, and asked about his journey.

They talked for a time, while Huon studied with interest the old house, mellow with sunshine. "Ah, you don't remember playing here as a baby? I forget just how old you were when your mother brought you to visit us, while your father went off with some old fisherman exploring in a boat." She wrinkled her brows and stared into the past. "Let me see, Lloyd must have been about seven, but then he is nearly two years older than you, and Gina, six. Prosper was a tiny baby, so that's right, you were five—just five because you had a birthday and a cake with candles that you blew out yourself."

"Was my father keen on boats and fishing, Aunt Myrtie?"

"Yes, and he loved the east coast. I hope you will, too; and you must stay at Fipwood as long as you can and get to know your cousins and all do things together. I expect Gina has told you Lloyd is studying to be an engineer, and only gets home occasionally—till the holidays? The two younger boys go to school by bus each day, but Gina—she's my right hand—is home all the time now she's left school."

Huon explained about Mr. Seward's generosity and the arrangement to go to Cottlestone when he returned home, but Huon's aunt was more interested in telling him about his cousins and leading him inside to where an elaborate tea was spread in a large, shabby room.

Gina came in with a battered silver teapot and got to work in a businesslike way filling cups, her face unmoved by her mother's open praise.

"Now, make a good meal, dear boy. You are much too thin! I hope Gina has put plenty of cream in your tea?"

"Cream!" exclaimed Huon. "I haven't seen cream like this since I stayed with a friend who is a beekeeper in Devonshire."

"Cream? Why of course! In the old days here at Fipwood . . ." His aunt paused vaguely, then added, "But at least we still have cows."

"Don't I know it!" put in Gina with feeling. "I ought, since I have to do the milking."

"Ah well, who knows, dear? Perhaps Huon may like to learn and take a turn sometimes? If that's the boys," she broke off as a loud clatter sounded in the passage, "make them wash their hands, and bring them in to meet their cousin. Tell them to come and welcome Huon."

She was interrupted by quarreling voices and a scuffle that ended as the door burst open violently. Tacky shot inside as though propelled from without. Prosper followed more slowly, with a grin on his face.

The two boys wasted little time on civilities, but got to work on the cream cake, eying Huon over the top of enormous slices with what seemed like suspicion. He thought he had seldom seen two brothers as good-looking, or with worse manners.

Their mother, however, seemed not displeased; after they had run out, giggling, she talked about boys being boys. "Sometimes they can be rather noisy, but I can see they were on their best behavior for you," she assured him. "They'll soon be trotting around after you as they do around Lloyd. You see. You'll be able to do anything you like with my two imps, soon. I can see they've taken to you at once, Huon. Haven't they, Gina?"

"If everyone has finished," was Gina's reply, "I'd like to get on and clear away."

That night, standing before his window, which gave him a picture of a silver sea framed by black pine boughs, Huon began to count the days till the Swards returned

and he could start his job. October, and they would be back in December, date unknown, say . . . six weeks till he could get away! Six weeks at the earliest. It was a long time, especially as he seemed to have got off on the wrong foot with Gina.

But why, he asked himself, what did I say to the girl? The boys, too, whatever their mother might believe, seemed more inclined to hostilities than hero worship.

Puzzled and a little dismayed, Huon had to remind himself that after all this was the first day—the first day of new experiences in a new world.

A little later, searching for his pajamas, he tumbled out his father's diary and opened it, smiling to think that the precious map had after all been scorned. "But at least I can explore the country while she plays tennis," he promised himself, "and as for this map, she won't be invited to look at it a second time!"



VIII

Huon Finds an Intruder

IF Huon had expected his six weeks at Fipwood to pass quickly, he was mistaken. Already half the time had dragged by heavily; even the novelty had changed to boredom, while his efforts at friendliness with his cousins had met with so much frustration that he no longer tried.

So each monotonous day found him slipping away as much as possible. His aunt was not aware of the many times he excused himself from tennis or picnic parties, for she usually rested in the afternoons, and Gina made no protest.

Outside and alone, he found everything different. Outside the sun shone on a wonderful land and there were ex-

citing discoveries to be made even of the sea shells on the sands. True, he longed many times for a boat, even a row-boat, and wished the vast stables held a riding hack instead of old Brownie, but there were still miles of lonely coast and strange bush country to be explored on foot.

Sometimes he helped his aunt in the tangle of garden, where the roses of November were struggling to bloom on unpruned growth and through matted thickets. She was embarrassingly grateful, praising him till Gina turned quite sulky, though it was obvious Gina had enough on her hands without gardening. She was very capable in the house.

On one such occasion, he remembered, his aunt had suggested he might learn to milk the cows. At milking time that evening he had turned up and offered to learn. "You can try if you like," Gina had said ungraciously, "but I expect it will only waste time."

He persisted, and grudgingly she allowed him to "strip" after she had done most of the milking. Next morning when he appeared at the shed she got up, saying she would take the bucket of milk in, and he could finish for her.

Rather pleased, he carried in the milk and returned with the empty bucket to finish the great work. The cow, who had been so quiet the previous day, now plunged about and lashed distractedly with her tail; it came round like a flail, boxing his ear most painfully. Putting his hand to the place, he brought it away cov-

ered in blood: at the same time, hoots of muffled laughter came from behind the shed and he saw an eye peering through a knothole.

Springing up, he gave chase, but of course there was no sign of Tacky or Prosper when he got outside. Furiously angry, he returned to the job. He found a piece of string and grabbed the cow's tail, meaning to lash it with knots to her hind leg. As soon as he touched it, he discovered a nail fixed in the hair at the end—the nail that had torn his ear.

Jokes of this kind made up a score he intended to settle one day with the two boys; for the present it seemed best to ignore them, for they gave him no chance to retaliate and kept up before their mother an air of respectful interest in their guest.

All the same, he thought of a more congenial way to pull his weight in the household than by trying to milk the cow, so he asked his aunt if she had any painting she would like done. She was delighted.

"I forgot you said you kept the houseboat painted up. Of course I would be thankful if you could repaint the doors and window frames of Fipwood, Huon. Why, you might make it look smart enough to sell!"

"Do you want to sell Fipwood, Aunt Myrtie?"

"No, dear boy, not really I suppose—although I ought to; it would be so much better for the children. However, no one wants an inconvenient barn of a place like this these days, so I'm never likely to find a buyer. I worry sometimes, though; it is so far for Lloyd to come

home and Prosper should go to high school really, and as for my poor Gina, of course she oughtn't to be buried out here at her age." She sighed and continued briskly, "Well, let's go to the tool shed and see what paint we can find. I know I bought a lot at one time."

They rummaged through a mass of old tins on shelves festooned with cobwebs, and found at last enough paint to start, and an extension ladder.

"I'll get Gina to fetch more from the store at Sandy Cove when she passes this afternoon in the sulky," said his aunt. "Oh, what a nice surprise this will be for Lloyd—and he may be home this week end! He hates us to look shabby, though he has no time himself, of course, working as hard as he does at his studies, poor boy."

"We'll try and give the front a face lifting before he sees it, then," Huon promised as he happily collected the materials.

"Yes, and that will help pass the time, won't it? I'm afraid, Huon, it is a little dull for you when Gina is busy and the boys are at school. Wait till Lloyd gets home! You will find us quite a gay household then!"

That same afternoon, waiting for further supplies of paint, he slipped away to explore in a new direction and discovered the great, shallow lagoon where the black swans came in their hundreds to nest.

It was a fascinating place and for the rest of the week he allowed himself a few hours off work each afternoon to visit it. In the great solitude of the lagoon he made himself hiding places in the reeds where he could watch

unseen. He saw tremendous flights, and once a bird alighted within an arm's length of where he hid; he held his breath and studied the white under the black wing and the pinky-crimson of the bill, with its broad band of white near the tip, until in sudden alarm the huge wings spread again and she was gone.

He saved his letters to read in the peace of the lagoon, staring absently at the water and the swans while in thought he returned to the Thames. Occasionally he looked at the strange and lovely scene with resentment, too homesick to do more than deplore the fact that he was here. "Felicity was right," he told himself. "I let them push me around."

The November sun increased in power, and another week slipped away; Lloyd wrote to postpone his visit home because of an exam, and Huon nearly finished painting the woodwork of Fipwood. Then, one day, Ernest Seward arrived in his little red car with news.

"Dad says to let you know he'll be home in a few weeks' time now," he told Huon. "He can't give you an exact date because he may be delayed in Melbourne on business. As a matter of fact," he confided, "Neal is thankful to have a week or two longer, for clearing up after shearing. He said to tell you if we hadn't been going flat out with two men short he'd have fetched you over to Cottlestone before now, to have a look around."

"I suppose I couldn't be any help?"

"Er . . . no thanks. You see you have to know the

game. But we'll get you over to look around before Dad shows up." Turning to Gina, he asked, "Did you say you had a letter from Lloyd? Will he be home at the week end?"

"Yes," she answered with a frown and a meaning glance at Huon. "Come out in the garden and see the roses; they are wonderful this summer."

Huon smiled to himself at the surprising interest Ernest evinced in the garden, and went back to his job.

There was a shower that night, so when he went to his work after breakfast he decided to give a finishing touch to the top windows, which were less likely to be damp, being in the full sunshine.

He extended the ladder to reach his bedroom and climbed it slowly, turning every now and then to enjoy the vista of sparkling sea and rugged islands seen between the pine boughs. He was feeling particularly happy in the joy of a job nearly completed, and the news that Ernest had brought. Lloyd, who seemed so popular and was about his own age, would be an asset at the week end, too, he felt sure.

Paintpot in hand he climbed the last few rungs slowly, till his head came over the window ledge. All at once his casual glance inside became transfixed: he stared incredulously, for Gina was seated on his bed with an open letter case, and in her hand—there could be no mistake—was a small leather book, his father's diary!

He made no sound, but the intensity of his gaze must have disturbed her, for suddenly she raised her head

and stared straight at him. Beyond losing a little color she gave no sign of embarrassment as she said, "Hello? Do you usually come into your room by the window?" Yet he noticed she managed to slide the book back in the case. In a voice icy with fury he asked, "Are you going through my private things?"

"What do you mean?" she replied innocently, though with a quick movement she slid the case away. "I'm dusting around. Boys never think a room needs dusting, do they?" With great energy she flicked a duster round the rail of his bed as she added, "Mrs. Scragby can't do everything, you know."

"Please get out! I'll do my own dusting, thank you."

"Oh all right, all right. Don't forget to polish the linoleum."

She went out, banging the door after her, while Huon seized his case and went through it carefully, wondering if she had read any of his letters. Then he remembered the diary in her hand, and sat staring at it, thinking. Evidently she was much more interested in that map than she pretended. He rustled through the leaves to find it. It was gone!

Again he looked, and this time he smiled with relief: two pages had got stuck together, so she had probably failed to find it. He remembered trying to mend the little booklet with some sticky material; a corner must have overlapped and so—perhaps—saved the map from her eyes.

He parted the leaves carefully, then sat on, thinking.

He reviewed many incidents, from the time Barbara Seward, reclining in a punt, had mentioned the wreck and the map, to this moment when Gina (who claimed not to want it) seemed about to take the thing. If anyone should have it, he decided, it was Barbara. She had at least been friendly, and he owed nothing to his Gogud cousins.

He looked around the rather bare room for a safe hiding place, for the book was too bulky to carry about in his pocket. The problem was—where? Glancing at the high, ugly walls he remembered suddenly the gleaming white enamel of his little cabin in *Water Vole*, with its door opening on the river for his morning dip, and felt he could stand this no longer.

Suddenly he sprang up and stuffed both letters and diary inside his shirt. He told himself he must get away, get right away for a time—or be sick! With a bound he was on the window ledge where the paintpot rested. Leaving it where it was, he was soon down the ladder and away, flinging through the pine trees and making instinctively toward the lagoon.



IX

A Person with a Beard

As soon as he arrived at the reedy margin of the lagoon, Hu knew that he was in no mood to sit and contemplate wild swans. Wheeling to the left, he followed, without much heeding the direction, a bush track marked by deep wheel ruts. Soon tall trees surrounded him and shut out every familiar landmark.

In time, his heat of mind became less urgent than the physical heat of his body from running: his preoccupation with the things he would like to do to his cousins, particularly Gina, gave place to a desire for shade, and a place where he could find clean water to drink.

Slowing to a walk, he began to look around. Strange,

sheeny, silver-white tree trunks stood up like telephone poles, their foliage of dull green seeming designed to let the utmost sunshine percolate and withhold the shade. The ruts went downhill, however, and soon he found a small stream bubbling over stones and around clumps of a wiry-stalked fern such as he had never seen before. He sat here for a while to cool off.

His mind took longer to cool completely than his body. Added to the crimes of the Goguds was general disappointment, homesickness, and a loneliness; and to these last was added the sharp prick of a letter from Felicity, describing the thrills of the sailing race at Ranelagh when his own *Spurwing* had come second. Gloomily he surmised that the "Basil" mentioned in his place had given every satisfaction. He would!

Then, growing calmer, he laughed and told himself not to be such a fool. It was splendid that *Spurwing* had done so well. As for Fipwood, this was only an incident; in a week or two at most the job would start at Cottlestone, and then he need never see them again—except Aunt Myrtie. Also, he didn't intend to be "pushed around" at Cottlestone if, after a fair trial, he found he hated the job. It would surely be possible to work a passage back to England in some boat? . . . And yet . . . and yet . . .

Pushing from him the hateful thought of returning as a failure, Hu sprang up and scrambled back to his wheel-rut track. Bark crunched beneath his shoes with a delicious fragrance and there was an unknown scent in the

air, too, as of flowers. Should he go on, or turn back?

The track wound ahead through trees, luring him on. The bush was still—so still—with such a feeling of peace and tranquillity, the air so soaked in sunshine, that obviously painting houses must wait.

Again he laughed aloud, restored to good humor in remembering the classic Mole, and how he had suddenly flung down his brush, said "Bother!" and "Oh blow!" and also "Hang spring cleaning" and bolted out of the house without even waiting to put on his coat.

So, on went Hu "in the joy of living and the delight of spring without its cleaning," till he stopped before a huge tree that looked as though it was covered in hoarfrost, and recognized the white for thousands of small blossoms. Parrots with raucous cries were tearing down whole sprays for mischief. He picked one up and examined the delicate fringe round each cup of glistening nectar.

As he stooped he felt the bulky package in his shirt. Fetching out the letters he tore them to small pieces and buried them deep in the hollow trunk of the flowering tree.

Feeling oddly like a conspirator, he straightened up, only to stand rigid with the diary in his hand as he heard footsteps approaching from behind. Thrusting the booklet in his shirt again he turned, in unreasoning panic, to face whoever approached.

It was as well he steeled himself for the unknown, for the sight that greeted Huon was not that of an

ordinary man walking through the bush, but of a queer figure advancing slowly and deliberately. He seemed not like an old man for he held himself too erect, but he walked oddly, planting one foot deliberately on the ground, pausing, then advancing the other, and all the time slowly waving his arms to and fro, as though to make Huon some mysterious signal.

With a horrible sensation pricking his scalp, it was all Huon could do to stand his ground and not bolt from the place. Then, fascinated as a rabbit under the eye of a weasel, he watched the other person draw closer, staring in particular at his face, about which there was something peculiar—inhuman. For, while the top of the head appeared to be covered in thick, fair hair, from the nose down it displayed a beard of gleaming black that extended in a tapering point to about the middle of his chest.

And then, still staring in utter amazement, Hu saw that the beard moved. Yes! The beard moved! It was alive! . . . In a moment came comprehension as the figure stepped a pace closer: *the beard was made of bees!*

Divided between simple wonder and hysterical laughter, Hu waited. He managed somehow to control his features, forcing a helpful expression instead of a broad grin. He was not frightened unduly by bees, because his friend in Devon whose hobby was beekeeping, had drilled him properly, instructing him that when bees were gorged with honey for swarming they were less inclined to sting than at any other time. Presumably the

bees on the man's face were a swarm. Yet what nerve he must have to let them swarm on his face!

"Can I help you, sir?" he inquired.

Slowly and carefully the bearded head dipped very slightly, but no word was spoken. Instead came rather an eerie gesture of the arm. At first Hu did not understand—till he saw the camera and boxes on the ground. He walked over and picked up the camera, "Want me to take a snap of you?" he asked, and waited for the reply, till he remembered how impossible it would be to open a mouth on which bees were walking about—how difficult even to nod the head.

"Stamp once if you mean 'yes,' " he added quickly.

Immediately a boot was raised from the ground and gently replaced in the same spot, while it almost seemed to Hu the eyes staring at his were twinkling with humor.

"Shall I finish the roll?" he asked, and after taking the photographs was given other instructions by signs, even to preparing the box to receive the swarm.

When at last all was ready, the man came close; with a quick jerk he removed the bees, and stepped back. For a moment it was hard to see anything but a rising cloud of bees; but through them a voice full of mirth shouted exultantly, "Thanks no end! I couldn't believe my luck when I saw you waiting there to help me!"

The sinister bearded man had changed under Hu's eyes into a lanky youth of about his own age, with a large, friendly smile!

"Didn't they sting you?"

"Oh, no. They're very quiet. One or two—nothing!" He brushed a hand gently around his jaw, rubbing it tenderly. "By gum, they weigh a ton, though! And I thought I'd either swallow some or choke when you called me 'sir'!"

"I thought you were a bearded old man!" They laughed over the joke like old friends and then, as they watched the bees form into a velvety stream and pour themselves along the sack and through the narrow entrance into the hive, Hu was thanked again. "I couldn't have walked much further and I was dying to have a picture—the magazine I take (it's the apiarists' one, of course) offers three pounds as a prize for a picture of bees swarming in an unusual place. I reckon I've a chance for it, don't you?"

"And how! You certainly deserve at least a fiver. How do you train your swarms?"

"Well, it's easy enough if you've plenty of time. I've often carried in a swarm from the bush on my arm, but of course a chin's harder; and these are wild bees—black—and I didn't know them."

"Meaning bees don't sting if properly introduced?"

"Meaning I've introduced proper queens to the bees in *my* hives, and they know better than to sting *me*!"

Then, to satisfy Hu's curiosity further, he explained, "Haven't you heard of the Italian strain that don't know how to sting—Ligurians?"

"No!—D'you send all the way to Italy for queen bees?"

"Gosh, no! I come from S.A.—but haven't you heard the story?"

"S.A.," repeated Hu, his mind taking leaps from Tasmania to Italy and on to South Africa.

"Yeah, South Australia. That was my state—before Dad died and Mum and I came to live with Unk here. Well, they breed the queens on Kangaroo Island, see? 'Way back in 1884 they found there were no bees on the island so they took this strain in, and left 'em to breed away in peace. Then one day they woke up to what they'd got, and now they have a Government Department to breed 'em up; I've heard they send queens all over the world. Come over and have a squint at my apiary. I've got ten colonies going strong. I'm Jimmy Stone."

"My name's Huon—Hu Trivett. Thanks, I'd like to—very much—but I suppose I should be getting back to my job now."

With a feeling of slight shock Hu was recalling the ladder resting against the front of Fipwood, and the paint frizzling in the tin.

"Won't take you long," promised Jimmy. "Unk's farm is only the other side of this ridge. You come from the Old Country, don't you? Thought so, from the way you speak. Well, my mum's from Scotland so she'll want to meet you. Can't you spare us half an hour?"

"Oh, yes! If I'm back by half-past twelve, which is when they lunch, I mean have dinner, at Fipwood."

Jimmy, who had been watching his swarm while he

talked, wheeled round suddenly. "Fipwood? Oh, then you'll be the cousin—the Goguds' cousin? Of course, Dr. Trivett's son. Then how come you understand about bees?"

"But I don't!"

"Go on! You aren't scared of 'em like most."

As they walked away from the swarm, Hu explained about the friend in Devon; and Jimmy explained what he called his own "setup." "See, I'm just crazy about bees and Unk lets me have as much time as I want, so long as I do the plowing and all the tractor work for him. He doesn't go much on machinery. He's a queer old cuss, never married, and sort of set in his ways. But we get on well together—him, and Mum, and me."

Then, till they came in sight of a little gate in a hawthorn hedge, he talked only of bee trees and honey flows, queens and swarming fever, and which type of gum tree produced the best-selling honey.

"This is Unk's place," he said at last, pushing open the gate.

Huon found himself at once in another world. The bush stood sentinel around, but here was an open space sweeping in front down to a valley ending in the hard, blue line of the sea. Before them a low cottage with a red roof of corrugated iron squatted in the center of neat grass paddocks; between that and the back door was another gate, and a kitchen garden.

"We won't go in yet as there isn't much time," said Jimmy. "Come and see my honey house first."

Sheltered by the hawthorn hedge were two neat rows of white beehives, and a tiny shed beyond. The outside was old and gray, but within it gleamed like Hu's own cabin in *Water Vole*. One wall was almost entirely window, with a carpenter's bench in the best light; on both sides were cupboards and shelves, and the rest of the small space was filled with honey tanks; frames, and other woodwork; a wax press and the latest design of honey extractors.

"Electric?" asked Hu, surprised.

"Oh, yes—and isn't this a neat gadget for an uncapping knife?"

The small clock on a shelf ticked away the minutes unnoticed as Hu listened and examined, carried away by Jimmy's enthusiasm and by his own aroused interest.

"Gosh! I'm afraid that clock's right. You'll have to bolt for it. Will you come tomorrow and spend the day?" Jimmy pressed. Hu explained about the painting job, but promised to take the afternoon off.

"Good! You'll see Mum then," said Jimmy, escorting him to the door. "Wait!" He turned and pulled down a box from the top shelf. "These are books on beekeeping. Take this one, if you haven't read it."

"Thanks," said Hu, and as he was stowing it away a thought came to him; for a moment he hesitated, then, reassured by the look in Jimmy's eyes, he dragged out the diary. "Would you mind if I left this—er—with you?" he asked.

Jimmy did not ask any questions; for a moment he

held it with a little smile while his left hand scratched his ear, then he dropped it in the box and swung all back on the shelf.

"Anything you like to leave will be quite safe here," he remarked, "and if it's all the same to you, I wouldn't mention to the Goguds that you've met me."

When Hu was quite lost to sight, Jimmy went down to the house, whistling blithely. "Know who I've been showing my bees to, Mum?" he called. "Someone staying at Fipwood, the Goguds' cousin, Hu Trivett. He's a good guy, too, with quite a lot of sense about bees."

"Will you not bring him in then, Jamie?"

"Tomorrow. He couldn't stay, now. Tell you what, Mum, I think those stuck-up Goguds are making a mistake. He's a quiet sort of a chap, but he's not so soft as they think, this cousin of theirs."

"Whist now, Jamie! Remember they're his own kin? Dinna say aught, laddie—"

"Don't worry, Ma! I didn't let on we can't stand that crowd—or about Unk's fight with the old man. But I mean to keep my ears flapping down at the Cove. I heard a thing or two—Lloyd's coming this week end—and, well, I'm going to keep my eye on this Hu."

"Aye," his mother smiled, her little brown face wrinkling up like a baked apple. "Do so, Jamie. I'd like fine ye had a body of your own age to dander round with. Aye, hot bannocks to your tea and the best of the preserves, laddie, when he comes."



X

"I Haven't Got the Map"

SINCE Lloyd was expected home, Fipwood rang with cheerful sounds on Saturday. In the kitchen, cakes were being iced for the tennis party at the club, and a pair of fowls sizzled in the oven, while Prosper and Tacky clattered away excitedly to take possession of a rowboat they had cajoled from a neighbor for fishing—stressing the need to entertain a visitor from England rather than Lloyd, who lacked popularity with the folk at Sandy Cove.

Huon too felt excited, though chiefly from a different cause. He had spent a wonderful afternoon with Jimmy Stone, learning to wire frames for the supers of the hives,

and to place in the sheets of wax foundation, running the little wheel of the embedding tool neatly enough to please even Jimmy. It was good being assured, too, that the honey flow was already "on" and that without him his new friend would be "properly up a tree." The up-shot was a pressing invitation to spend the whole of Saturday with them—urged, too, by Jimmy's little mother in warm Scottish phrases.

"So I'll come away as soon as breakfast's over," he promised Jimmy as they parted at the gate. "They won't want me. There's a tennis party for Lloyd in the afternoon. The only thing is," he looked straight at Jimmy, "they'll wonder where I'm off to—shall I tell Aunt Myrtie?"

"Not if you can help. These cart tracks—ever wondered why they lead from our place to Fipwood, though we never use the road?"

"No!" Hu looked bewildered. "Can't say I have."

"Unk bought this place from Mr. Gogud. It used to be all part of the Fipwood property, and there was a bit of a dust-up over this right-of-way—see?"

"Oh. So you're not on speaking terms with them?"

"Well, it's nothing to do with me, really, but—"

"I see."

He felt later he had managed it rather ingeniously, by asking Gina if he might cut himself some bread and cheese and miss the family dinner on Saturday. "But Lloyd will be here," she had answered, giving him rather an odd look.

"Yes, I know, but you're taking him to tennis and I'll meet him as soon as he returns, won't I?" he had countered.

That had been last night, and now there was nothing to do but go downstairs and make a pretense of collecting the lunch. He poked his head through the kitchen door and noticed, through a cloud of steam, Ernest Seward with a tea towel in his hand, helping Gina.

"Hullo!—the very man I want!" called Ernest.

"Me? Why?"

It was Gina who replied, "Aren't you lucky! Ernie's come over on purpose to take you to Cottleston for the day." Hu failed to see her expression through the steam as she added, "You won't have to run off by yourself, after all."

Turning to Ernest, he said, "Thanks very much—but don't worry about me. As a matter of fact, I've got the day planned."

"—but only going out in the bush by yourself, isn't it?" asked Gina quickly. Ignoring her, Hu made a last attempt to dissuade Ernest from his good intention, "I couldn't take up your time running me about. You want to go to Gina's tennis party, don't you?"

"Oh, that's all right. I'll be back in plenty of time. In fact, I'm only to deliver the goods and then about turn. Neals says he'll show you the place and return you to Fipwood when he goes to meet his girl at Swansea in the afternoon."

Hu tried to suggest that there was no immediate need

to see the place where he would so soon be working, but it was useless—they had all the answers. So, with as good a grace as possible he took his seat beside Ernest in the red sports car.

They did not talk much as they headed north, following the coast road. Ernest seemed preoccupied, until he roused himself to answer comments on the scenery. "Those mountains the other side of the bay? Oh, they're not an island, that's Freycinet's Peninsula. French? Yes, he was the French explorer who discovered it. See Cole's Bay tucked in there? That's a grand place for a vacation!"

"It must all be grand for sailing. Do you own a boat?"

"No, but I've sailed round that part with friends of mine. They come up the coast in the summer in their yacht. Once we landed there—to the south of the Peninsula—and climbed the peak you see. It's over two thousand feet, and since the foot of man has hardly ever trod there, the scrub's very thick."

"Doesn't anyone live there? It looks pretty wild."

"No, it's uninhabited. It's almost an island, actually, and from the top—where you get a terrific view—you can see that Schouten Island was probably once joined on to it; for you look straight down on the narrow passage with steep, rocky sides. They say the Schouten Passage can be dangerous to a sailing boat—if the wind changes."

"I'd like to try it!" Hu was feasting his eyes on the

fine expanse of blue water—wasted—wasted! Oh! with all that to explore and never a white sail to be seen!

Ernest gave him a quick look, cleared his throat, and spoke in an elaborately casual voice. "You're interested in islands, are you? Oh—that reminds me—something I was going to ask you about. My kid sister, Barb—you met her, didn't you, in England? Well, she's written to say you've got a map or something or other of an island? Your Dad made it—" he paused and laughed lightly, but Hu looked still at the sea and made no comment. "It's supposed to show where some gold was planted years ago by a shipwrecked mariner, isn't it? Not that any sane person believes these buried treasure yarns!"

"That's correct," Hu agreed, trying to relax; for he had felt himself stiffening like a watchdog with a burglar, as soon as Ernest had mentioned the map.

"Well," Ernest floundered on, "as I expect Barb has told you, some of the lads and lassies are planning a bit of sport for the Christmas holidays—just for the heck of it, you know! I told Barb no one in his right mind believes there's a smell of gold or any other such nonsense on these uninhabited islands, but—you know what girls are—anything for a bit of excitement. They've set their dear little hearts on a treasure hunt, so I say—why not give them their fun?"

He paused hopefully, but Hu's face was still toward the sea.

"So," Ernie labored on, "I thought I'd just put a word in your ear. If you want to be a sport and—er—be most

awfully popular with all our crowd, you've only to give them a bit of a look at that map and let them work out a little holiday for themselves. See what I mean?"

"You mean my cousins would all be going on the—the trip?"

"That's right. At least, I reckon so. I know Gina would be interested. She's a girl who is always on for any fun going. You know, Hu," Ernest confided in the most friendly way, "I can't help being sorry for that kid. What fun does she ever have? A game of tennis once a week and a few picnics in summer? It's a shame, if you ask me. She's tops with the boys, too, and always getting asked to things—movies—dances in town and that, and how often does she go? Of course, I needn't point out to *you* the lack of cash about the place, need I? It's a handicap for a pretty girl like Gina to have to slave at home as she does. Not many would stand it—and she could easily get a job in town. I must say I feel dashed sorry for her. That's why I've mentioned this to you."

"Can't they have a camping holiday without a treasure hunt?"

"Aw!—think for yourself! It loses half the kick!" he laughed, "—and there's another point. If you give them a map of some sort, Mrs. Gogud won't make much fuss about their going. Lloyd will talk her around, you see, by saying the expense will be nothing if they find what they are after."

"But I thought you said there wasn't any gold."

"So I did, but don't you see your aunt will have heard

the old yarns of the *Rua Rua* wreck and fall for that better than anything? See what I mean? It's a trick of course, but if you don't mind my saying—she's a bit difficult when it comes to spreading cash, so they have to work a quick one on her. You get the idea, don't you?"

"No," said Hu bluntly. "I offered Gina the map when I first arrived and she said Lloyd knew where to look, without it."

"Ah—girls!" Ernest waved one hand with a manly gesture. "I know 'em! As a matter of fact, Hu, she told me about that. You needn't have taken offense, for she didn't mean a thing. Not a thing. She was worried that day—she's practically got the whole place on her shoulders, you know—and afterward when she saw that you—that you'd taken it wrong she was too proud to ask you just to lend it, for them to show Mrs. Gogud. I can understand how she felt, can't you? Of course she might have known you'd be a sport but, well—girls, you know!"

Hu's tongue itched to ask if Gina had also told Ernie she had raided his room in search of the map, but he held his peace.

"We leave the coast road here and turn inland," said Ernest as they took a corner on two wheels. "I expect you wonder what the hurry is, with some weeks to go before Christmas, but the idea is to fix everything up this week end while Lloyd is home. So," he smiled brightly, "that'll be all right, won't it? I mean—the map's not the slightest use for anything except kidding the old

lady into agreeing to a camping holiday. I'd like to join them myself, so it would do me a good turn, too, if you'd be a sport and chuck the thing over to them."

"I'm sorry, Ernest, but I think they can get around Aunt Myrtie without my help. Anyhow, I haven't got the map now."

"Oh, I didn't expect you'd be carrying it about on you! Tonight, if you'd dig it out—"

"No—and it isn't at Fipwood, as it happens."

"Oh?" Ernest stared ahead with wrinkled brows, digesting the conversation. The road climbed for a mile or two in a series of hairpin bends and nothing was said till these were safely past. Pausing at the top an instant before descending into a wide, sunny valley, he seemed to come to a conclusion. "I get you," he said, "you mean to hang on like a dog in the manger. Well, much good may it do you! At least we know where we stand."

Grasping the wheel less casually, he leaned forward, and nothing further was said as the little car hurtled down to Cottlestone.

"Shut the door, Gina—we've got to talk," said Lloyd, perching himself with languid grace on the kitchen table. "I've sent the boys out fishing!"

"I made Mum lie down as you said. She was glad, really, after all the excitement."

"How has she been? She doesn't look too good to me."

"Oh, yes, she's all right. She always gets het up when

you come home, you know—like the rest of us.” She ventured a bright glance at him.

Lloyd smoothed the hair at the back of his head complacently; he approved the worship of his family, though he did not permit it to become a nuisance: also he was very fond of his mother.

“Can’t we talk on the way to tennis?” continued Gina. “It’s getting late and I’ve got to change.”

“Plenty of time for that. There’s a lot to plan, old girl. I’m glad you got Ernie to remove Hu for the day—though I want to meet him, later.”

“I thought I’d better, Lloyd. He’s taken to disappearing for hours at a time and I can’t make out what he’s up to.”

“Oh? Along the coast?”

“I’m not sure. I haven’t time to track him and he goes when the boys are at school; but I know he was furious today because I blocked his plans.”

“Good. Did I tell you I met Ernie’s friends and it’s O.K. about the yacht? I didn’t go much on Jacko Burlington myself, but he knows how to sail the thing, and will take us there and back. Also, thanks be, he’s not interested in treasure, or anything but sailing and fishing!”

“Well, that’s splendid! Then there’s only Mum to get around and we can fix on a date?”

“Um—it’s not quite so simple. One catch is the old Dane, Olaf. I tried him again to get the exact position of the island, but he made a scene and the nurse booted

me out. However, you got my message, I hope? Did you get hold of that diary, as I told you to?"

"I'm afraid, Lloyd"—Gina dropped her eyes—"I didn't have much luck."

"Gosh! What do you mean?"

"I found the diary, but I couldn't find the map inside it. Do you think he could have taken it out? I read a bit that referred to a map, but it wasn't there!"

"You could tell if it had been torn out. Why didn't you look carefully? Haven't you any sense?"

"Because, if you want to know, Hu walked in before I'd finished—"

"My bright sister!" shouted Lloyd, springing to his feet, "don't tell me you forgot to lock the bedroom door!"

"Of course I didn't!" cried Gina, her cheeks flushed, "but how could I tell he would suddenly appear like that at the window?"

After some explosive comment, while Gina explained about the painting work, Lloyd calmed down, and asked her gloomily what she had managed to glean from the diary.

"I really only saw the end, which was mostly long descriptions about rocks and cliffs and landmarks in the island."

"Nothing significant, you mean? Nothing about the gold?"

"Well, I'd just read the words 'a fortune for the brave . . .' when Hu's wretched head bobbed up!"

"Strewth!—and why 'brave' I should like to know? You don't need courage—you need a spade to dig up buried treasure! Look here, Gina, we've got to find that map!"

"But you said—"

"Never mind what I said! Have you searched his room properly?"

"Yes, every corner—today, as soon as Ernie took him off. It's not there. He's probably got it on him—though I'd have noticed the diary, it's fairly bulky—" she broke off with a reassuring smile. "Don't worry, it will be all right. Ernie is going to get around him to lend it to us for half an hour tonight. That do you?"

"Five minutes would do—less! But—though I haven't met the fellow—I doubt if Ernie will find it so easy, now he's awake to the fact that we're after it. I'd rather find the thing myself. Did you look under the linoleum?"

"It's all tacked down. No, it's not in his room. I'm positive of that!"

"Then it's parked somewhere else in the house. I've got it! Of course! All this painting—the old shed where we never go—it'll be parked behind those paint tins. Come on!"

He dragged a reluctant Gina to help him make an intensive search in a place thick with cobwebs and the rubbish and dirt of years. They were both cross and black and unusually inclined to snap at each other when at last they went indoors.

To make matters worse, Ernest had returned and was

looking for them. "What on earth! You look as though you've both been sweeping a chimney!" he cried with hearty, misplaced humor. "I thought you'd like a lift along to tennis in my bus, but you don't look exactly like tennis! What *have* you been doing?"

Without reply Gina bolted. It was left to Lloyd to ask what luck Ernest had in persuading Huon to hand over the map.

"It's no good, I'm afraid," he replied ruefully. "The silly cow seems to be going to hang on—blest if I know what for! I did my best for you, Lloyd. He's a bit of a swine, isn't he?"

"I think you're probably right, Ernie," said Lloyd with a judicial air, "though I haven't met him yet. As for the map," he continued easily, "if he isn't decent enough to share, as far as I'm concerned let him stick to it!"

With these words he went upstairs, ostensibly to change for tennis, and spent some time in Hu's bedroom, with the door locked, crawling about the floor prodding it with an open penknife.



XI

An Invitation to Fipwood

AT COTTLESTONE, Huon took to Neal Seward at once. He had his father's bluff, friendly manner and observant blue eyes. An aunt who was doing the house-keeping in the absence of Neal's mother gave them an excellent cold lunch with lamb grown on the place, more tender than any meat Huon had ever tasted.

It was a joy to him to sit in a comfortable, well-cared-for room again and look beyond the veranda onto a sweep of green lawn trimly cut and watered incessantly by sprinklers. Neal explained that the garden irrigation was done with water pumped up from the river, a quarter of a mile away, in the center of the valley.

"Have a look at this and you'll see the whole layout of the place," he said, leading him in to a small office, one wall of which was taken up by an immense aerial photo of the whole of the Cottlestone valley.

"It's roughly twelve thousand acres, and when Dad bought the land, all except the bit round the river was classed as 'third class bush land.' Dad drained the lower marshes first—here, see? Then he worked up the hill-sides, clearing and fencing all the time. We're at it still, clearing more runs, exchanging the bush for good grass paddocks for sheep."

"What's this—like a dark smudge over here?"

"Ah, that's the Plantation. That's Dad's great pride—pine trees to make a breakwind, you know, and for timber!"

"It looks as though you cleared out the native trees and then planted pine trees in their place!" exclaimed Hu.

Neal saw nothing strange in this and agreed without a smile. "That's right. Now, we'll hop in the utility truck and I'll take you a run round and you'll see everything. The shearing shed is almost new—electric machines and all the latest gadgets."

The dull gray and black of the photo was replaced by the vivid greens of a lush valley, which could not be seen all at once but opened out to their view as they drove along. It was fascinating to watch the picture come alive, redrawn in bright color, as they raced here and there, never leaving the wide boundaries of Cottlestone.

The river Huon thought disappointing; it consisted chiefly of a few deep pools, and Neal admitted that in summer the channels between them were often dry. After Fipwood, Huon found it pleasing to see machinery cared for, tools kept under cover, and gates that opened and shut; and all the wonderful arrangements made for king sheep.

The sheep, however, he found the least interesting part. So organized and regimented from birth to slaughter were they that they seemed no longer animals—merely wool-and-meat-producing machines. A picture flashed through his mind of Jimmy Stone lovingly examining some bees on his bare hand, worrying because they had given themselves needless work in pulling out a comb he must destroy.

“And those are the killers—for our own use,” Neal waved a hand at half a dozen creatures grazing, ignorant of their fate. “Well, you tasted the sort of lamb we can grow, at dinner, didn’t you?”

The tour ended with a cool drink on the shady veranda while Neal arrayed himself in smart gray and the latest in shirts.

It was late in the afternoon before they reached Fipwood again. Neal cut Huon’s thanks short as he left him at the bottom of the drive. “That’s all right. Glad you could come. Will you be ready to come over to Cottlestone as soon as the Boss returns?”

“Yes—any time!”

“Right. I’ll come over, or get Ern to fetch you, when

the Old Man shows up—and I bet it won't be long now, whatever Mum and Barb do, fooling around in Melbourne. I know Dad wants to get back."

With a feeling of real elation Hu walked up the drive. He had been fetched for inspection, he knew that, and he felt sure Neal approved—whatever Ern might think of him. Now, it remained only to be patient a little longer, till the job began—and to see as much of Jimmy Stone as possible before then.

He was meditating slipping over there straight away when a motor bike came racing up behind, and stopped just before him. A tall, slim youth in tennis rig was soon advancing with outstretched hand, overwhelming him with a charming friendliness, as he introduced himself as Huon's cousin, Lloyd.

"Know anything about motor bikes? Care for a run? Ever tried chasing sea gulls on the hard sand when the tide's out?"

Like a strong breeze, Lloyd's good nature buffeted Huon along, so that before tea he was on the pillion seat madly chasing along the sand of the mile-long bay that ended at Sandy Cove. As soon as that meal was over—and Aunt Myrtie had made it specially resplendent—he was dashed away to see a movie at Swansea. It was after midnight before he got to bed.

He hoped the family would get up late, as was their usual Sunday habit, but surprisingly the two boys followed him to the beach when he went for his morning

dip; and Lloyd, in pajamas, was wandering around the terrace smoking cigarettes when he got back.

"We are getting the boat out after breakfast, Hu," he called, as though the boat was his own. "Care to come fishing? It's just the day for it. I told Mum you'd help pull her in a fish dinner."

The fishing was good fun; they caught quantities of a type new to Huon, called flathead, which they professed to despise though their mother was quite pleased to have them.

"You wait! This afternoon I'll take you where we might land bream or rock cod. I know a place—" said Lloyd darkly.

"Good-oh!" shouted Tacky, while Prosper inquired if he had the White Rocks in mind.

"You kids won't be wanted," Lloyd told them briefly.

"Aw, cut it out, Lloyd! We'll bait the hooks for you!" wailed Tacky.

"It's a good way out. You'll want us to row," Prosper pressed him.

"Not this time." He waved them away. "Hu's a grand one in a boat, aren't you, Hu? Done no end of it on the Thames River—I bet you have!"

Hu was beginning to find the charm Lloyd turned on, and the rather crude flattery, nauseating, though he still warmed to his cousin's enthusiastic manner, and enjoyed being swept into Lloyd's activities. This afternoon's expedition, however, made him uneasy. The boys seemed almost too docile about being left behind; and Gina,

who had grumbled that she couldn't get away in the morning, made no attempt to join them.

His fears were not allayed, when, after he had pulled some distance, Lloyd said, "Hold your horses! I'll drop a line here. Might be as good as any other place."

They were in the middle of the bay that washed the cliffs of the Scramble. Hu threw off his shirt to bake in the strong sunshine; Lloyd played with a line and talked—talked differently, in a confidential, man-to-man way, asking many questions. What was Hu's opinion of Neal Seward? Getting little response, he aired his own—"Neal's a bit of a woolly, of course—we can't all have brains—but in his own line he gets a lot done. I've quite a lot of time for old Neal."

Careful not to overpraise him, he next brought Ernest Seward up for review. "Have you noticed he's apt to get hold of the wrong end of the stick—Ern? But he doesn't mean a thing, he's really as sound as they're made. A bit dense, that's all. Of course he's fallen heavily for Gina—as anyone of your intelligence will have noticed, Hu. Am I right or am I right?" He laughed.

But Hu guessed which way the conversation would lead and was peering into the water, stalling for time. It seemed only decent to offer the map to him—after all it was Gina, not Lloyd, who had said it was not required, and that was obviously a lie. Barbara wouldn't worry if Lloyd had it, for evidently he had written to her to get it . . . if he was going to give it in the end, why not offer it now and not wait to be asked?

Against this reasoning, something in Hu fought obstinately—something that told him he was being played like a fish on a line and would soon be hooked. The thought made him ask, without looking up, "Are they nibbling?"

"No, it may be a bit too early for cod. We'll just hang about here for a bit and wait and talk," said Lloyd, adding casually, "let's see, what were we talking about? Oh, yes!—Ern! Oh, by the way, did he tell you what's cooking for the Christmas holidays?"

"Yes," answered Hu promptly, measuring the distance to shore with his eye. "Neal told me—a dance for Barbara, isn't it? As it's so hot," he went on rapidly, "I'll have a dip while we're waiting."

"Don't do that! You'll disturb the fish!"

But Hu, poised for only a moment on the boat seat, had dived in. He came up, shaking the wet out of his eyes, and noted a rather sour expression on Lloyd's handsome face, though Lloyd inquired, affably enough, "What's it like in?"

"Super. I'm going to do the cross channel act. Will you be the boat that follows to pick up the body when I give up?"

"You're crazy, Hu! It's further than it looks."

It was a long pull, further than he had ever swum before. Hu kept on doggedly; his limbs felt like lead weights, but his mind was happy. In his mind he was telling Felicity, "I'm running away. I'm swimming away. He's so bored, following me. I'm swimming away

from him—swimming—not being pushed around. There is a difference—see, Fil?”

When, after an eternity, he touched bottom and raised his head, it was to hear shouts from the beach. Gina was standing there, waving frantically to Lloyd and calling, “The Merrimens have come! Mum wants you both to come in—quick!” Hu smiled to himself: there might be no more time for private sessions with Lloyd now, before he left. . . .

It was something of an ordeal to be produced as a prize exhibit by Aunt Myrtie before her old friend, Thelma Merrimen, and to have both of them discover family likenesses in him. Yet Mrs. Merrimen could not have been kinder, inviting him to visit her when he went to Launceston, and offering the chauffeuring services of Gloria—the daughter who had driven her to Fipwood—who promised to show him the sights of the city.

“Don’t you miss the country, though, Thelma?” his aunt asked.

“My dear Myrtie, I’m thankful to miss kerosene lamps and sparing the bath water, and saving every drop you wash in for the lettuces!”

“Still, I hate being crowded,” Aunt Myrtie persisted, only to be told, “My dear! Our house is nearly as big as Fipwood—and quite as old! Of course one half is rented out as an apartment, and I’m going to convert most of the rest of it one of these days. You’d better come and stay with me while I’ve still got plenty of spare rooms.”

"No, *you* come and stay with me while I've still got plenty of water in the tanks for the lettuces!" Aunt Myrtie laughed.

"Yes, but Mum's right, Auntie Thelma!" cried Gina, appearing suddenly. "Won't you come and stay this summer? Mum never has a friend like you, who can talk over the old days at Fipwood—do you, Mum?"

"You sweet thing!" Aunt Thelma beamed.

Later, when the ladies went upstairs, Hu went to the kitchen to carry in trays, and heard Gina make a cryptic remark to Lloyd, "It worked! I'll nail her down as soon as you give me the date."

"Good work!" They glanced at him, and hastily fell to discussing fruit salad, while Hu went out grinning to himself, wondering what Mrs. Merrimen would think when she found she was invited not so much as guest, but as companion-help while most of the family went a-treasure hunting?



XII

A Honey Flow

THE WEEK END had certainly not been dull with Lloyd home. He left at six o'clock on Monday, on a sparkling summer morning, calling to his mother that he would be back again for the holidays just as soon as his exams were finished.

"That might be next week end," suggested Prosper as they stood watching him disappear down the drive. "Think we could keep the boat till then for him?"

"If so, I'll bring you some fish," Hu offered hopefully. But Aunt Myrtie didn't hear, for she had already gone inside; and Gina said no, the boat must be returned

at once; the boys might as well take it now since they were up early with nothing else to do.

"So—nuts to Hu!" shouted Tacky hilariously and raced for the beach.

Hu looked after him thoughtfully; it had occurred to him once or twice that the time had come to teach small boys manners. Obviously they were ready to work off the repressions of the week end on him—yet why waste time *now* when the sooner he reached Jimmy and explained about last Saturday, the better?

A stone flung by Prosper, though he was not in sight, almost made him change his mind; but the chance was too good to slip away early, and soon he was sprinting through the fine, clean-smelling bush, arriving before eight at the little gate in the hedge.

As he fumbled with the latch he heard the tap-tap of a hammer. Already Jimmy was hard at work in the honey house.

"You! Gosh!—must be the answer to the maiden's prayer!" was his rapturous welcome. "How long can you stay?"

"All day—if you need me," said Hu simply. "I'm sorry I couldn't turn up on Saturday. What happened was—"

"Never mind—tell me later! You're here, that's what matters, and I've got no end of work for you to do. Could you paint a few of those supers for me? I'm running short—short of supers! Know what that means? It means, my friend, a flow—a honey flow!"

He put a foot on a crate, held a newly-wired frame like a lute and twanged the taut wires till they vibrated, singing lustily something with a refrain that went:

O honey—my honey!
You're worth a lot of money
My honey weighs a ton-ny
In the flow!

The performance concluded with a few steps of a tap dance, a whack on the head for Hu with a frame—which broke the wires—and a short wrestling match outside till they both rolled, helpless with laughter, on the grass.

"Poor coot," said a grave voice above Hu's head. "It takes him that way. It takes a girl to drive some boys crazy, but with him it's a honey flow." A large head was solemnly shaken and a big hand stroked a luxuriant gray moustache, behind which may, or may not, have lurked a smile. "And he thinks he's working hard!"

"Stop it, Unk! I *am*—Hu is only the unhired help, and I have to show him around, don't I?"

"Come and have breakfast!"

"Well, that's the most sensible thing you've ever said!"

Hu and Jimmy sparred with each other, and both fooled with Unk, over porridge and scrambled eggs, and hot scones with honey, served at the kitchen table by Jimmy's smiling little mother.

"Anyway," said Hu with a wink at Unk, "what *is* a honey flow?"

Pandemonium threatened to break out anew, despite

cries of mock alarm—"Quiet, Jamie—be quiet, now!" and Unk's statement, "It's like a disease that gets our Jimmy now and then."

"Come and help me get these frames ready and I'll show you a honey flow!" cried Jimmy, springing up, and capering back to the honey house.

Once inside and seated again at his bench, frivolity left him. He brought out an assortment of paintbrushes and arranged Hu's work, then settled to his own. However, at intervals through the morning's work they stopped for a chat. Jimmy called it a "smoko" though neither of them smoked. Once he took Hu through the gate to show him a eucalypt in flower.

"That's a peppermint gum—see the tiny flowers? That's what is making the flow. It may not be a big one, though."

"I can see dozens of trees white with flowers like this one."

"Yeah, but it only needs a high wind or some rain to spoil them. We don't often get a flow out of peppermint. Why I'm a bit pleased about this is because I need some cash. I've got a scheme in my head—" He paused, seemed about to say more, then broke off as his eye fell on the line of hives. "Come on! If we don't whack supers on, the bees may start swarming on us, and then—no flow!"

At Fipwood no questions were asked about his disappearances, and each day during that week he managed to

spend many hours helping Jimmy Stone. The climax to their work came when the honey house throbbed with the revolving of the honey extractor, and Hu learned to uncap—to slide a special knife deftly under the wax capping of the sheets of comb that Jimmy wheeled in from the hives on a barrow. Having cut off the wax covers in a thin slice, Hu placed the dripping comb in the machine. When the basket for the combs was full, he set the extractor in motion and the honey was whirled out against the sides by centrifugal force, leaving the cells as mere empty sockets.

“Bottle-o! Empties!” Hu would then bellow, and Jimmy would restore the ravished frames of comb to the hives where the bees at once cleaned them again.

It was hot work, for, Jimmy explained, it must be done in the heat of the day, when the honey was most liquid. Mopping his streaming brow and removing some bee stings from his bare arm as he waited for supplies, Hu was astonished to see Jimmy return with an empty barrow.

“It’s no go!” he yelled. “The rest aren’t capped. The honey in them isn’t ripe. We’ll have to call it a day!”

Gloomily he fetched hive tool and smoker and started putting things away. “There’s not much here,” he said later, estimating the amount in the honey tank, and what was flowing in a rich brown, translucent stream from the extractor. “I should have waited a few more days. But the weather feels to me like a change—and I might have lost *you*.”

"Yes, they may send for me to go to Cottlestone any day now," Hu agreed. "I wish it wasn't so far away from here."

"What did you think of the place?"

Hu told him as he helped clean up the shed, adding, "But they are not as tender with the feelings of sheep as you are over a single bee, Jimmy!"

"Well, that's the difference in our jobs. I make my bees work for me, but I don't eat them afterwards, and they have some peace sometimes. Sheep get none. Always being chivvied about by dogs, always moved somewhere else, always being shorn or dipped or branded or crutched or having their tails hacked off. And the *smell* of sheep! D'you like it?"

"Not as much as this," Hu agreed, sniffing the good clean beeswax, honey, and wood shavings of the workshop.

"No, and I've got an idea—it may be mad but I think the *smell* of the place where your job is, is dashed important: if you don't like it you don't like the job. Mum likes the cooking smells of the kitchen best—Unk the smell of new-turned earth—but," he broke off abruptly, "you'll say I'm talking through my hat! Put the lid on the honey tank, will you, and we can go."

"I think you are quite right," said Hu soberly, pausing before he shut away the sight of so much honey. "This looks marvelous, doesn't it?"

"Too dark. The lighter honey sells best. This is like beer."

"Wish it was! I could drink the lot—could drink anything!"

"Don't tell Unk, then. He hates what he calls beer-swillers. But Mum's got some good lemon cordial stuff and the water in the tank at the back is always cold. What about a spot of sea, after? Unk's not using the truck. He's hoeing spuds. It won't take five minutes to run down to Sandy Cove for a swim."

Usually Huon made a point of returning to Fipwood before the boys were back from school, but this Friday he was careless, enjoying his swim with Jimmy, and a sun-bake on the sands by the boat sheds, after.

"Will you get any time off, at Cottlestone?" Jimmy inquired. "I could borrow the truck from Unk and fetch you over some Sunday. Perhaps we might go fishing?"

"I say! That would be perfectly wonderful, if you could work it. But what about a boat?"

"Oh, Unk's got an old one—it's in *there*"—he jerked his thumb at the third shed—"he hardly ever uses it. Bought it years ago from a chap who sailed it round from Dunally, for a holiday."

"Sailed it?" Hu sat up abruptly.

"Yeah," Jimmy went on, unaware of Hu's interest, for he had his head buried on his arms as he sunned his back. "Unk never uses the sail, of course; it's probably rotten by now. The thing's all right as a rowboat—only a bit heavy."

To Hu's eager inquiry he answered that the door was

locked and Unk had the key, but they might get a squint at the boat through the cracks in the shed.

Hu was trying to find a good crack when they noticed a bus make its dusty way round the head of the Cove, stopping at the little cluster of houses round the one store and the post office.

"Gosh! that's the school kids, home already," Jimmy exclaimed, "and I promised Unk I wouldn't be late. Come on, I'll run you to Fipwood first."

"No, you won't! I'll cut along the beach—it won't take long—and go up the Scramble." Hu set off at once, to prevent argument, sprinting over the same sands where Lloyd had once taken him on his motor bike.

The day was growing even more sultry, and clouds were rolling up with every sign of a thunderstorm brewing. Huon reached the cliffs as hot as before he and Jimmy had their swim. As usual, there was no one in sight, so he decided on a quick dip in a deep rock pool to freshen up before going indoors. Slipping out of his clothes, he left them on a rock, and dropped in below it, mother naked.

Swimming a few strokes, he dived; then—remembering it was late and he must not be tempted to stay in—turned under water and returned to his rock. As he emerged, something moved above him which his bleared eyes mistook at first for a sea gull—a second later he realized it was Tacky—Tacky in bathing shorts, barefoot, scooping up the clothes from the rock, about to bolt off with them.

With a great effort Huon sprang; as he did so a warning shout came from Prosper concealed somewhere under the cliffs, but his spring had been successful enough for him to grab an ankle before Tacky could move, and though Huon suffered a bruised shin and grazed his knee painfully, he hung on.

Squealing with terror, Tacky struggled to get free; then, on Prosper's shouted advice, hurled the clothes in his arms over Hu's head into the sea. Instead of letting go, as he hoped, Hu dragged him off the rock and with a free hand managed to salvage his gray pants before they sank, allowing the rest to be carried out to sea.

Had Pros come boldly to the rescue of his brother at this stage, while Hu was clutching his one garment and battling with something that seemed a cross between an eel and a wildcat, as well as struggling to get him ashore, there is no doubt Tacky could have got away. Prosper, however, contented himself with flinging abuse at Hu, with threats to fetch Gina, and advice to Tacky on how to act; so that the chance passed and Tacky was at last subdued, and his wildly kicking legs bound together with wet pants.

Seeing escape was hopeless, Prosper aimed a few stones at Huon—which went wide—and started up the Scramble, yelling to Tacky that he would soon bring help. Halfway up the cliffs he turned and looked down. Huon had Tacky across a tree trunk of smooth driftwood, half buried in the sand.

"You great brute!" shouted Prosper, seeing what was

about to happen, "I'll tell Mum! Lloyd's going to hear about this! You wait, I'll tell them all where you sneak off to each day. Think I don't know you go making up to the Stones? Dad called them cunning rogues, and so they are! If you touch Tacky, I'll tell Mum!" he screamed, and climbed quickly a few yards higher.

Turning again, he saw that Hu had extracted the leather belt from Tacky's bindings—he had nothing to wear himself until the punishment was over. Glancing up at the cliff, he saw Prosper gazing down, fascinated.

"You little skunk—I wish I had *you* here!" he muttered as he got to work.

Prosper waited and watched, screaming abuse that was lost in Tacky's yells and dire threats of revenge, till it seemed unhealthy to stay any longer and he disappeared from sight.

After Tacky had been released—and made record time up the Scramble—Hu took stock of the situation. It was clear that it would be unwise to follow Tacky, since a rock rolled from above would have a depressing effect on Hu's skull, so he decided to go round by the drive and enter Fipwood by the little-used front door. He wondered, as he pulled on his wet and shapeless pants, what his reception would be, and whether Pros would make good his threats.

The air felt close, even his damp garment did not cool him properly. From far off came a sound like a roll of drums, some rain fell in great drops, *plop-plop*, and the pine trees sighed mournfully as he hurried for their

shelter. A fine elation surged through him as he ran shirtless through the rain, his self-respect restored at last by squaring accounts in some measure with one, at least, of his cousins, before he left Fipwood.

A tremendous crash rent the heavens just as he reached the front door; he realized Jimmy had indeed been right about a change of weather, and feared this would mean the end of his honey flow.



XIII

A Mutual Aid Pact

WHEN Hu quietly pushed open the door, hoping to clothe himself better before meeting any of the family, he was aware of voices in the hall. Someone was saying, with a short laugh, “. . . but I didn’t think he’d have the guts!”

Since it was too late to retreat, he clattered in noisily. The talk between Gina and Ernest Seward stopped abruptly, and although Ernest took in his odd appearance with a smile, it was not unfriendly. It occurred to Hu suddenly that even he might have found the younger Goguds trying. Gina said nothing, only stared at him with hard eyes.

"Dad's home again," Ernest announced. "He said to tell you to come over and make a start at Cottlestone tomorrow, if you like. Being a Saturday, you can get a bus to Swansea. Neal has to go there, so he could pick you up in the afternoon. Let's see, to get to the bus"—he glanced doubtfully at Gina—"perhaps someone would drive you in the sulky."

His suggestion brought no response from Gina, and Huon was quick to explain he would rather walk since he had very little to carry. Ernest gave details of where to meet Neal, and Huon sent a polite message to Mr. Seward, and asked after Barbara.

"Oh, *she* isn't home!—nor is Mum. Dad just left them to it in Melbourne. Barb is great friends with some people she met on board, and has gone to stay with them. I doubt if she'll turn up before Christmas. By gum!" he exclaimed, as lightning flared for a moment, making a dazzling display in the gloomy hall, "it's come at last, and gosh, we need rain! I'd better make tracks for home—quick!"

After Hu had changed, he went to find his aunt. There were scurryings when he opened the doors, but the rooms were all empty. At last he found her, upstairs, lying down. "I hate thunder, don't you? It always gives me a headache. I won't come down to tea. Have you had a good day, dear boy? You will have to amuse yourself indoors this evening. There's a game called 'rummy'—the boys are very fond of it, and I know they'd love to play it with you," she suggested.

Unable to hide a smile at the thought of Tacky and Prosper playing parlor games with their archenemy, Hu drew up a chair, explained he would be busy packing, and told his news. His aunt seemed genuinely sorry he was going. "But of course you'll come over to see us when you can, won't you? Just turn up any time, like one of the family. I'm afraid sometimes it's been dull for you, when Lloyd's away, but . . ." she paused and listened to the growl of thunder overhead.

"Lloyd gave me a wonderful time last week end," Hu said quickly, then, deciding to tell her himself about Jimmy, "and I have enjoyed exploring around—the bush is so different from our woods, you know. I've learned quite a lot about bees, too, from someone I met by chance"—he glanced at her for she seemed to be only half attending—"he lives a few miles away from here. His name's Jimmy Stone."

"Well, I'm so glad, dear. I thought you'd love the east coast. Your father meant to come back here to live—did I tell you? He was most interested in some island—but then, of course . . . Oh listen!—the rain's coming down in sheets!"

They parted affectionately, Hu explaining that he would not disturb her in the morning to say good-by, as he would be leaving early.

On the stairs he met Gina carrying a tray up to her mother. "Your tea's ready for you in the dining room," she told him, without looking in his direction. He went back to hold the door open for her; then, rather sur-

prised, made his way to the room so seldom used, since the big table in the kitchen was the usual place for family meals. Rather uncomfortably he wondered whether they were trying to make a special occasion of his last meal with them.

A glance at the table soon corrected this idea: a place had been prepared for one person alone. From the kitchen came the usual noise of mealtimes, but he was evidently to be segregated from the herd. "One up for Ginal!" he chuckled to himself, admitting it was also one up for his cousins that they had not told their mother of his brutal treatment of Tacky.

He ate his slab of cold mutton and drank his cup of tea with more friendly feeling toward them all than he had felt before. The air was still warm, though rain was lashing the pine trees and splashing up from the paths, and a scent of old-fashioned cabbage roses drifted in through the open windows. No more boredom, he exulted as he munched, no more petty irritations—tomorrow, a job!

Packing everything neatly on the tray, he slipped upstairs. An idea had come to him—perhaps this would be the last meal at Fipwood, for he could not leave without first telling Jimmy Stone his plans.

Though it had been simple in broad daylight to follow the cart tracks, Huon found it quite another matter to do so on a dark, wet night, when his only help came from a small, failing pocket flashlight, and the occasional

vivid lightning, which left the world the darker after its swift passing.

It was slippery around the wheel ruts, which were full of water, yet he dared not leave them for firmer ground lest he miss the way altogether. The light bush of day-time seemed replaced by a solid, black wall of trees on either side, and the distance to the Stones' farm twice as great.

Stumbling suddenly, he found he was tripping on small branches: a large tree had crashed across the track. This was the last sight his flashlight showed him before it petered out altogether.

Then, in something like dismay, he found himself in a vast, desolate world of unending black shapes, with no landmarks he could recognize. Should he go back—feeling his way by the water in the ruts? No! Once past this tree he could pick up the ruts again, and might as well go forward as back, he decided.

The difficulty was to skirt the fallen tree; feeling with his hands he sidled his feet along carefully, only to find he was grasping a living sapling instead of a dead tree. Then where was he? Cursing himself for a fool, he stepped back—moved several paces, yet could find no more branches by his feet.

Hopefully he waited for the help of a flash of lightning, but the storm had passed, the rain had ceased; there was even a faint gleam that might be of starlight, overhead. In this faint light he discerned, not the tree that he sought, but the dark shape of a hillock to his

left. Here was something tangible and solid; he would climb to the top and wait till he could see around better.

Slipping and scrambling, clutching with sore, red fingers at anything to give a handhold, Hui dragged himself up. All the while the ominous words "lost in the bush" were ringing in his ears; he determined he would not be tempted to walk "round in circles"; he would stay on the hilltop all night if necessary.

Never in after years was he to forget the pure ecstasy of the moment when, believing himself lost, he saw a twinkling light the size of an orange, and realized the Stones' cottage was just below his hill.

Miraculously the clouds parted to reveal a watery moon. He waited just to look around, rejoicing to note the hedge behind the apiary, the garden, the paddocks, and the big sweep down to the sea. From this vantage point Schouten Island was clear before him in the now stronger moonlight. From here he could see the cliffs and the narrow passage dividing the island from the peninsula—could even spot a darkly-etched shape *beyond*, which might be another island. Was there one there? He was almost sure there was.

Drawing a deep breath, he took in the whole beautiful scene till, charged with exultation, he leaped wildly down the hillside, scratching himself painfully on the way—charging down to the little friendly light below.

Jimmy's mother was in bed, and Unk tapping out his

pipe, when Jimmy dragged Hu in and made him dry his wet clothes before a cheerful fire.

"A young feller like me," said Unk, "needs his sleep. No doubt you two will sit up half the night swapping yarns."

"Yeah, and be up fresh as daisies in the morning," agreed Jimmy as he hustled about, fetching a mattress to spread on the window seat to make Hu a bed.

"As to that I can't say, not having been a daisy to know how fresh they feel at six A. M.—but I'll see you turn out, fresh or not, for milking—so don't make any mistake about that, son," grinned Unk as he gave Jimmy a playful clout on his way to bed.

"Now we can talk in peace," said Jimmy, preparing a large pan of bacon and eggs. "Go ahead—did they boot you out of Fipwood, or what?"

Huon laughed and explained what had happened.

"So you gave one of those boys a hiding? Good for you! They've been asking for one for years."

"Yes, but I wish it had been the other one; it's Prosper who eggs Tacky on—and takes good care to keep out of trouble himself."

"Umm. I've heard a few yarns about that one. He puts it over the other kids, somehow. There's Perky Taft, who does odd jobs at various people's places, he's told me things—but never mind those Gogud heels. What's all this about going to Cottlestone so soon?"

"Yes, tomorrow! Mr. Seward is home and has sent for me."

"Oh, curse it!"

"What's the matter? Burned yourself? Let me cook them," Hu offered.

"No, no! The eggs are all right but—well, I may as well tell you, this upsets all my plan."

"What plan?"

"It's like this," said Jimmy, after a short pause, "the rain has ruined the present honey flow, and there's nothing more coming. My plan was to push out and establish an out-apiary, like they do in S.A.—a friend of mine up north has told me of a fine stand in a belt of blue gums. Might get a ton or more of honey from them, and blue gum is the best—I told you that, didn't I?"

"But—can you move bees about like that?"

"Oh yes! In S.A. they think nothing of taking twenty colonies a hundred miles if there's a flow on—and mind you, they pay for the stands there—sometimes five pounds for a few weeks. It pays 'em. Sometimes the flow's so good the chaps work all day extracting honey, sleep under the truck at night, and move on to another stand when that flow's over."

"It sounds a bit like grazing stock!"

"So it is, and sometimes two fellows turn up at the same spot with their bees, and they have fights to see who shall graze them, just like the squatters did over their sheep in the old days. Ding-dong fights, too! But it's a new idea to Tasmania and I thought—suppose we both nipped up to this place, Saggilly, and went shares, trying out our luck?"

"You mean—take your bees there on the truck?"

"Yeah. Shut the hives at night—nail a strip across the front—and away we go! Quite simple. Unk said we could have the truck for a certain time if we paid running costs out of the profits. I was going to suggest we each chucked in a fiver to cover cost of food and what we need camping—that's why I wanted to extract some honey to sell, see? But now," he sighed deeply, "I reckon it's no go. A man needs a pal for a game like that—someone who can drive a car, too. It's no fun driving all night with no one to take a turn at the wheel sometimes."

"Did you plan all this tonight?"

"I talked it over with Unk just before you came—when I knew the rain had spoiled the flow here. I thought there might be a week or so before Mr. Seward was back, and, if we started tomorrow—"

"*Tomorrow?*"

"Why not? I meant to pack our gear in the daytime and set off after dark."

Feeling slightly dizzy, Hu took a little time to think this over. Of one thing he was certain, more than anything he would like to go with Jimmy.

Talking of other matters, Jimmy made toast, and shoveled the fried eggs on top; they ate with plates on their knees. Suddenly Jimmy said, "Well, if you're off tomorrow, don't forget to take that book along—the one you left with me—in the box on the shelf."

"No, I hadn't forgotten. It's got something in it my cousins want to see, so I'm going to leave it for Lloyd

when I depart—a sort of good-will gesture after all the disappointment I've been to them." He laughed.

"Don't be a fool!" cried Jimmy roughly. "It's the map, isn't it? No, I haven't touched the thing—but I've heard some rumors. Did Lloyd ask you for it?"

"He was going to, but he hadn't an opportunity. I'll tell you about it, Jimmy. I would have told you before, but somehow we seemed to talk of nothing but bees!"

"My fault—you didn't have a look-in," Jimmy reproached himself. "Unk's right, I have got a one-track mind!"

At the end of Hu's long story, the two boys sat staring at a log that spluttered in the fire, while above their heads the old clock ticked away, the hands pointing to midnight.

"What I can't understand," said Jimmy at last, "is, why don't you go after the treasure yourself? If it's anyone's, it's yours!"

"I did have an idea in England that I might look for it—not alone, of course, but with my cousins. However, apart from them, there are too many snags. I'd need to know local conditions, I'd need a friend to go with—and a boat—and quite a lot of money. More than all these—I'd need to know where the island was!"

"Doesn't it say?"

"I'm sure it's off this coast, but no latitude or longitude is given—nothing to show where the island *is*, only where the loot is concealed."

"If you could have talked to Olaf, he'd have told you."

"What do you mean? Who is he?"

"Didn't you ever wonder how the Goguds got on the scent? They say down at the Cove that the old Dane who used to live there—Olaf—got sick one night and mistook Lloyd for your dad, telling him the secret he's nursed for years, because your dad saved his life."

"Then why did Gina want the map? It looks to me," said Hu slowly, "as if your friend Olaf left out a key piece when he told Lloyd. I wish I could have a talk with the old man."

"Afraid you can't—he's almost a goner, they say. Been in hospital for months, now."

"Couldn't anyone who knew the islands around the coast get a clue from my map? Couldn't you, Jimmy?"

"Gosh, I might be able to! Shall I fetch it?"

A little later two heads, one fair, the other dark, were close together poring over a small map on the table.

"Of course! It's clear as mud," cried Jimmy excitedly at first glance. "It's a humpy lump that's all cliffs except to the south, where some rocks come around like a claw making a small beach—here it is—the only possible landing. It's Green End, an island you can almost see from here only it's behind the Schoutens. As a matter of fact, you can see it if you climb Windy Hill above here and look through the Passage."

"Then," Hu's voice was awed, "I saw it tonight in the moonlight!"

Neither of them spoke for a time, both being busy with their thoughts.

"So," said Jimmy at last, getting up, "it's just like your dad said."

"Umm—so—what?"

"So—this. We'll make a pact. You come with me to Saggily and help with the bees for a week or two; then, I'll come with you to Green End Island and we'll squint around for the treasure. We'll go before Christmas, to get ahead of the tourists from Fipwood. Is it a do?"

"It's a do all right, Jimmy; except—what about my job tomorrow?"

"Hmm, you say Mr. Seward's a decent sort of person; couldn't you have a talk with him, if I run you over there in the truck tomorrow?"

"Yes! I don't think he'd mind if I postponed it—I could ask him. I'll tell him, shall I," Hu laughed, "that I've been offered a better job?"

"That's right, so you have. I wish you'd take on bees with me, for your living, instead of those old sheep. Well, is it all set? Then we'd better make tracks for bed."

"All except one snag—what about a boat?"

"Oh, you coot," yawned Jimmy, "didn't I show you Unk's? I might point out, though, that it's probably rotten and the sail will fall to bits from lack of use. As for me, I know nothing about boats except how to be seasick in 'em. Otherwise I'm your man."



XIV

Lloyd Finds the Coast Is Clear

ALL SET?" asked Jimmy, throwing a last glance over his load.

"All set!" replied Hu, his voice hoarse with fatigue as he fastened the last knot—a sailor's knot—in the rope over the tarpaulin. Underneath, the beehives with their live contents were stowed, as could be told from the angry murmur rising from the bed of the truck.

"Got your own things in?" Jimmy talked as he walked round, inspecting everything; then, as Hu nodded, he clicked off his flashlight and stood a minute under the full glare of the headlights, checking over a grubby list

in his hand. "Good-oh! Nothing forgotten," he announced, climbing into the driver's seat.

Hu took a last look at the sky, dark with wind-torn wisps of cloud and bejeweled with bright stars, before settling himself beside Jim Stone.

"Jamie! Jamie!" cried his mother, rushing out with a paper parcel clutched before her, "the pies! Will ye not be forgetting the pies!"

"Thanks, Mum. They weren't on my list. Thanks. Right! Off we go!"

The roar of the engine drowned her final instructions, her pleadings that they should cook themselves proper meals and not let the bees "bite" them.

"You'd think bees were tigers, wouldn't you?" Jimmy chuckled as he moved the truck carefully into the road. Behind them Unk was still waving a hurricane lantern to and fro above little Mrs. Stone's head, while she fluttered a white handkerchief in their direction; so, as Hu said, it was a proper send-off.

"We'll go to Swansea for the first lap," said Jimmy, "then you can drive for a spell. If you're hungry now, eat one of Mum's meat pies."

"Can't. She stuffed me too well at supper."

"Good. If all goes well, we'll take an hour off at dawn and have breakfast somewhere before we leave the coast—make some tea, and have a swim."

Hu found it difficult to keep awake, staring with sleepy eyes at the empty road stretching endlessly ahead with a wearying sameness. For relief, his mind went over

the events of the day, beginning with the moment when Unk, true to his promise, had roused himself and Jimmy from heavy slumber. He recalled the hasty breakfast he had snatched before he ran all the way to Fipwood, arriving to greet Gina in the kitchen.

It was clear she supposed he had just left his bedroom, so he had not disabused her, but fetched down his luggage, explaining that he was getting a lift and would be leaving at once for Cottlestone.

After piling his things at the bottom of the drive, he had returned to say good-by. Though not surprised that the boys failed to show up, he had expected Gina would say the conventional words to a departing guest; she, however, took refuge behind the cow and shouted a brief "Good-by!" without a pause in the milking.

Faithful to the time agreed upon, Jimmy had arrived and whisked him away. Along the road to Cottlestone, Hu had plagued himself worrying about how Mr. Seward would like the new sheephand to postpone his job. How needlessly! For "the Boss" as Jimmy called him, when he was told haltingly of their plan, had thrown back his head, and his laughter boomed out.

"I'm in no hurry, Hu! I sent that message because I thought *you* might be ready—perhaps more than ready—for a change." For an instant his shrewd eyes met Hu's with a twinkle. "As it happens, with the missus still away, I'd rather wait till the new year for you to start. Very glad you are striking out on your own. Who is this Jimmy Stone? Fetch him in. I must meet your new boss."

Jimmy came in, smiling gently. They sat with Mr. Seward over a cup of morning tea, while he drew Jimmy out, watching them both and asking practical questions. He approved the plan about the out-apiary; approved, too, of Jimmy—Hu was sure of that.

"You pick up all you can learn from Jim," he said. "He knows his job. It'll be a fine education, Hu, going this trip with him. I hope you both do well. Don't forget there's a market for a few pounds of the stuff over here—we've quite a row of sweet teeth!" Jimmy had replied as man to man, "Thanks, Mr. Seward."

When they climbed into the truck, Mr. Seward watched them depart. "I won't say too much about your plans," he told Hu, "though I guess it will soon get around that you aren't here."

Hu wondered now if his reply, "Thanks very much, sir," had been too English. . . . His thoughts began to stray to the other side of the world . . .

"Hey!" Jimmy nudged him. "Wake up, son! This is Swansea!"

With a jerk, Hu took stock of his surroundings again. They were well into the small town, which seemed unusually alive; people were strolling along the road in the moonlight.

"Saturday night's fun and games—people coming away from the movies," observed Jimmy. "I'll park a bit further down, by the jetty."

"There's a steamer there."

"Yeah, that's *Sir John Franklin*. Does regular work up

the east coast. She's probably called in at Maria Island, and come on here for the night. Tomorrow she'll cross to Cole's Bay. Want to go and have a look at her?" he inquired, as Hu leaned half out of the cab.

"There is a yacht, too—see her? She wasn't here when I came through with you this morning!"

"No, she looks like one of those yachts they bring up for fishing in the summer. I'll let the old girl cool down a minute and you can have an eyeful if you like, before we change over driving the bus."

In the still, calm night Hu walked down the long jetty to the yacht, approving her well-kept appearance and graceful lines, and he wondered if anyone was sleeping aboard.

Drawing a deep breath of content he strolled back. The lights of the little town were answered by twinkling lights across the bay, a murmuring of voices and laughter sounding clearly over the water—as it used to sound over the river. He was well awake now and there was a good feel about the world . . . life wasn't *too* bad, he grinned to himself.

"What was the name—could you see?" asked Jimmy as he slid out of the driving seat.

"Yes, *Ventura*. Know who owns her?"

"No, but I think she put in to Sandy Cove once, last season."

Dismissing such unimportant matters, Jimmy said he had examined the load, and it was riding well.

"All set then?" asked Hu.

"All set till breakfast—off we go!"

That week at Fipwood, a mighty family conference had taken place round the kitchen table after tea. Only Mrs. Gogud was not present, having been urged by her family to take a rest since Lloyd would be home not just for a week end, but for the whole of the summer holidays.

Lloyd, as chairman, held the bread knife in his hand and emphasized his most important remarks by thumping the handle on the table.

"So," he was saying, with a loud thump, "the coast is clear!"

"Only just—the beast only left this morning," observed Tacky.

"Well—listen!—Jacko Burlington has his leave and is coming here as soon as he can."

"Good! Whacko boy!"

"Let me do the talking, will you, Tacky? He's coming to the Cove. He should be at Swansea now, with luck. So"—Lloyd thumped sharply—"we've got to get off just as soon as ever we can—before anyone knows what we're up to. No waiting till Christmas is over. I want to get away next week."

There was a gasp of excitement at his words, but Gina shook her head. "Mum would never stand for it, Lloyd. We've simply got to be home on Christmas Eve."

"So we will—before, probably—if we get away when I want."

"What about Mrs. Merrimen? You know how busy everyone is just before Christmas. She'll never come in time."

"Won't she?" Lloyd smiled and stared down at the bread knife. "As a matter of fact she will. I took Gloria to the movies once or twice, and—it's all O.K. Trust me," he added, modestly.

"Good! Good!—and it's our holiday time!" Tacky burst out again.

"Then," said Gina slowly, "if she comes and looks after Mum, and this Jacko person turns up soon, and we get away, when we get back depends on how long it takes to find the island?" Before Lloyd could speak, she asked directly, "How will you manage without the map, Lloyd?"

"How will I cut it without a knife?"

"How will I marry without a wife?" teased Lloyd. "Didn't I tell you to leave all that to me?" and he started to sing.

" 'I know where I'm goin', ' " he said,

" 'And I know who's going wi' me—' "

"Oh, shut up, Lloyd, and tell us!"

"Can I trust you not to breathe a word, not even in your sleep?"

"Of course you can. You know we're safe as a bank."

"Ernie mustn't know, either. I'm afraid we can't take him, now we're leaving so soon."

"You must!—you told him!—and he arranged the yacht for you," cried Gina heatedly.

"I know, and I'd like old Ern to come along, but with Hu at Cottlestone it's impossible. Our dear cousin would be bound to get a clue. It would be best if we had no connection with that place till after we return."

"Ha ha!—return with the loot—and buy a car!" Prosper added gloatingly.

"If Ernie doesn't come, why should Barb?" Gina dared ask.

"She isn't coming. As a matter of fact, she wouldn't be allowed, not even after Christmas. I had a letter from her and she says they're being very balky and talk of a boarding school in Melbourne for her. They have absolutely turned down any sort of camping with us, the snobs."

"Ernie *must* come! Perhaps if he could get away at the last minute, we could tell him then. Jacko Burlington might wonder if he wasn't there."

"Ye-es, we'll see. I might work something at the last. For the next few days, though, you must cut your tongues out rather than give a hint to anyone of what we're up to."

"We will!" breathed Tacky fervently. "Did you have another go at the old Dane?"

"As a matter of fact, I did. I went to the hospital, not expecting much, and they told me he was better and had been moved to a nursing home. I nearly didn't bother to trail after him again, but in the end, I did. He glared as usual when I went in. Trying to think up a topic of conversation, I hit on Hu's visit to us. Cripes!—it worked

like a charm! He sat up and asked, 'So? Doctor's boy haf kom to find his island?—is goot!' I did a quick think and said, yes, it was good, he was going to have a look at the one his father had mapped, only—bother it!—I'd forgotten its name!"

"Lloyd, you're as cute as they're made," Gina broke in admiringly. "So he told you?"

"Made no bones at all. At first he bleated, 'Tell him I take 'im der—soon as I come out of dis place I take 'im der, ples you tell 'im. Ya!' But when I pressed him for the name, the old man gave it with no fuss at all."

There was a pause while Lloyd toyed with the bread knife, and three pairs of eyes hung on him expectantly. "So," said Lloyd at last, laying down the knife, "I'll tell you—with no fuss. It's—Green End. See? Quite handy."

"Green End! Just out there!" they gasped. "Why, I never heard of a wreck there, though I don't know why not. It's all cliffs, isn't it?" asked Prosper.

"It's authentic all right! I went to the State Library and got a chart that showed the shape and—it's got the feature I expected. Can't think why I didn't catch on before! I suppose just because it was so close to home. No, Pros, there are cliffs all around except to the south, and there's quite a depression in the middle with water most of the year in rocky pools."

"I've heard there's a clearing and someone once lived there and ran a few sheep?"

"Quite right, Pros—I heard that, too. But no one goes there now except to fish. Still, if we take a couple of

tents and camp in the grassy part we should be all right. A good camping spot."

"Green End! Why—if it wasn't for the Schoutens—we'd be almost in sight of it from here! I can't get over that. I thought it would be way up the coast somewhere," said Gina, "but now I can't get there quick enough! To think in a few days, or a week or so, we might—might be able—"

"—to throw our weight about a bit, for a change?" concluded Lloyd, smiling. "I must say I could do with a nice little sports model like Ernie's, and if we really cash in properly on the gold—why there's no limit . . ."

"The Government people grab a bit, don't they?" Pros broke in upon his dreams.

"Oh, a bit . . . still . . . " Lloyd sat up suddenly. "Well, plenty to do first! I'll slip up now, and have a talk with Mum. You, Pros, and Tacky, can haul out the old tent and see if it leaks. Pretend you're playing Indians or something. Gina!—we'll have to make a list of supplies after I've seen Mum!"

Gina agreed a trifle absently. She was staring in the direction of Green End Island, as he had done, but choosing a new evening dress—a real one—from the smartest shop in Sydney. Sydney! Why not London, or New York? . . . Sent by air . . . in nylon . . . or perhaps . . .

Her lovely face was dreamy.



XV

The Ventura Sets Sail

WHILE Jimmy and Huon camped away inland at Sagglily with their bees, the December days were feverish with activity at Fipwood.

"Giddup, Brownie!" shouted Tacky, laying on the reins as he drove the sulky down the last hill to Sandy Cove. In full view, the *Ventura* lay at anchor and her dinghy was made fast to the jetty, though the only person in sight was a small, untidy lad known to all as Perky Taft.

"Good for you!" cried Perky as Brownie, her flanks wet from the effort, brought her load to a standstill. "Know what, Tacky? The big fellow in the white sailor's

hat has gone up to the Store with Lloyd, to buy something for the ship."

"That's Jacko—Jacko Burlington, a good friend of ours, Perky," said Tacky grandly, as he climbed down.

"Aw! Is he the skipper, like, of the boat?"

"Yeah—but you mustn't ask a lot of questions."

"Why not?—e give me money to tell you to shove what you brought in this little boat, and go back for the last load. You tell me what they're up to an' I might give you a lick o' the ice cream I'm gettin'."

"No!"

"I bet you don't know!"

"I bet I do!"

"Look, I'll hold Brownie while you yank that out. What is it—a tin? Gosh, it's heavy! What's in it?"

"Water, if you want to know!"

"'s not!—aw, gosh—yes! So it is! Crikey, I've spilt some but doesn't matter, 's only water. What's this?—My gosh! Eats!"

"You leave 'em alone or I'll tell Lloyd!"

"A mattock?—'n spades?—What's them for?"

"Don't be so nosy, Perky! You're the nosiest one in the Cove. Plonk those things in the dinghy there, and I'll give you a ride up the hill."

The tired Brownie was made to take the hill briskly, and Perky Taft was suitably impressed; indeed, he fancied driving in this style past the straggle of houses to the store, to spend his sixpence, and an argument

broke out when Tacky refused to take him further than the place agreed.

"All right!" Perky shouted, when he had been ejected forcibly and rather painfully onto the hard road. "All right, then! I know you're goin' off somewheres in that ship tomorrow, all of you. I'll dashed-well find out where you're goin' to!"

Tacky drove on, hoping Perky was swallowing plenty of dust. It would never have done to drive with him through the village and perhaps to have met Lloyd coming out of the store. How had Perky found out they were leaving tomorrow? What a Nosy Parker he was! However, Tacky chuckled to himself, there was one bit that Perky didn't know: if the weather held, they all would be leaving at dawn, stealing out of the Cove before anyone was around.

"Giddup, Brownie!" he shouted through sheer excitement, feeling he must yell or shout, or burst.

Next morning Mrs. Gogud stood with her old friend Mrs. Merrimen on the weed-covered terrace, both flapping tea towels vaguely toward the sea.

"Can you still see it?" she asked.

"Oh, yes!—it's quite a picture, the white sails on the blue water. What a heavenly morning, isn't it? Only the sun is rather in my eyes. I hope they can see us. Lloyd suggested a bath towel waved from the spare room window in front, but I'm sure they ought to see this."

Languidly she flapped again.

"I do hope they will be all right, Thelma. I would have been more happy if Ernest Seward could have brought his sister, Barbara. That would have been so nice for Gina; I don't quite like her being the only girl with all those boys, but it seems Barbara is still in Melbourne."

"And poor Gloria, who would have loved to come—she's such a girl for joining in any fun, you know, Myrtle—what I call a really 'good mixer'—poor Gloria couldn't get away from the office. She—"

"Yes, you told me, dear. Well, well. As long as Lloyd is there I needn't really worry about anything—he is so trustworthy, so—safe."

"You certainly have a charming son! So clever of him to plan this out, wasn't it? But—I meant to ask before—why didn't they take their nice cousin, the boy from England—I forget his name?"

"Huon?—Oh, I forgot he was here when you came last time. No, he hasn't done any camping; I don't think he would have cared for this sort of thing at all. The children say he didn't share any of their interests—like tennis. A dear boy!—and with the most perfect manners—yet somehow I fancy they found him a little heavy and hard to entertain. He's at Cottlestone, now, as sheephand, and I notice they never speak of him since he left. I meant to ask Ernest how he was getting on, but there was so much to do to get them off at this ridiculously early hour this morning, I'm afraid I forgot."

"It was early, wasn't it! I asked Jack Burlington if it was because he feared rough weather later, but he said

'no.' He's a very fine-looking young man, Myrtie. Is he one of the Burlingtons from the midlands?"

"I think so, originally—from Treebanks, you know. But this one they call 'Jacko' is in his father's law firm—Burlington, Ross and Burlington, in Hobart. I'm sure I met the father when I was a girl, at a dance—George Burlington. Jack said he had mentioned my name and might be calling in to see us one day. He and Mrs. Burlington seem to be holidaying on the coast while Jacko has the yacht. It is good of them to lend it."

"There! It's getting quite small in the distance, now. I don't think they'll be watching Fipwood any more, do you?"

"No indeed! Let's come inside and make a cup of tea. There's an odd-job boy who is to do the milking—a nephew of old Mrs. Scragby. I must see what he's up to. You know what these boys are like," she continued as they strolled inside. "You can only trust them as far as you can see them, and even his aunt says Perky Taft has his inquisitive little nose into everything, if you don't watch him."

A fair breeze some hours later took the *Ventura* through the Passage and showed those aboard the bold outline of Green End Island with its sheer cliffs rising from the sea.

Lloyd feasted his eyes for a time, and then asked Jacko about a safe anchorage.

"I've never landed there, but the only shelter for a

boat is inside the Cray Claw Rocks—see 'em over there? They curve round just like a crayfish's claw and I believe you can ride out anything there except a bad southerly or a gale from the west. The glass is set steady at present, but, as I told you, if there's a change I'll run no risks."

"No one asked you to!" Lloyd answered, with a laugh. He tipped his fine, new yachting cap—his Christmas present to himself—at an even steeper angle on his handsome head. "There's a shingle beach, very small and narrow, behind the Claws, they tell me. From the beach you can climb to the top, where we're going to camp. If you'd like to land us today, you can clear out if you want, and return for us later."

"If the wind holds, I'm going to prospect round for crayfish," said Jacko, his blue eyes—that looked so startling in his sun-tanned face—regarding Lloyd thoughtfully for a moment, resting with distaste on the cap.

"Yes, do!" Lloyd invited airily, feeling already that he was king of the island castle and must act as host. "You might get some big ones if you fish off the rocks."

There was a curious expression on Jacko's face as he removed his eyes from Lloyd and the jaunty cap he wore, and stared steadily out to sea. But then, how could he know that his guest had long ago mentally exchanged the *Ventura* for a much finer yacht, in which Jacko was merely one of the crew to spring around at Lloyd's commands?

As they drew closer, the silver-gray walls of Green End towered higher out of the oily blue sea with still

more mystery—more hint of a secret safely guarded. The sight affected those aboard in various ways; Gina and Ernest abandoned their sun-bathing on deck, to stare excitedly and to join in a nasal rendering of the latest dance hit; Lloyd studied a certain white gash in the rock and wondered if it would be safe to lower heavy minerals to the beach by a rope. As for the two younger boys, they were not particularly impressed with the island itself.

“Doesn’t look much of an island to me,” confided Tacky to Pros.

“No, you idiot—it’s not how it looks that counts. It’s what it’s *got*!”

Pros smacked his lips, winking knowingly at the sea gulls who hovered above the means to buy a model aeroplane, a bike, a canoe, and all the ice cream in Tasmania.



XVI

Hu Celebrates His Birthday

THE THREE small farms that comprise the settlement known as Sagglily are two miles from a steep hillside forested with the pride of the eucalyptus family, the Tasmanian blue gum. At the foot of the hill is a strip of land once cleared for potatoes, and here, startling in their smart white paint against the somber background, the beehives were ranged. Here also, though of secondary importance, was the camp of the beekeepers.

Hu, sketchily clad, was at work with a frying pan practicing the art Jimmy had taught him of cooking pufaloons, or fried scones. As he worked, dropping spoonfuls of batter carefully into the boiling fat, he

made suggestions for the rest of the feast to Jimmy, who was preparing things to eat on a packing case table.

"We might open your mother's canned apricots and serve them in our mugs, before we make tea."

"We might; and seeing it's your honor's birthday—we will."

"Seeing as it's your friend, Ginger Harrow, coming to tea, you mean!"

"Seeing as we're likely to make tracks tomorrow, I mean."

"No, you don't—you mean seeing as Ginger always brings a bottle of cream with him for the fruit—and so do I!" Hu stood up, wiping his moist brow, and transferred the puftaloons richly brown and cooked, to a pan waiting ready in the warmth of the ashes.

"Do you really mean to push off home tomorrow?" he asked seriously, spooning up more batter. "The weather seems settled enough now, don't you think?"

"Yeah, but the sun has come too late. The flowers are here—Ginger was quite right about the blue gums—but, see, they must have a lot more sunshine to bring them out and ripen the nectar for the bees. If we push off tomorrow, we can mess about with that boat of Unk's and be home for Christmas, and then come back here again when there's some honey to extract. Ginger says he'll keep an eye on things for us up here. He'll tip us off if we have to chase back in a hurry." He broke off to look along the rough track through the bush. "I can see him coming now. Hope he doesn't forget the butter."

"I wouldn't mind living on a farm where they throw butter and cream around like old fish heads," Hu remarked.

"Don't make any mistake, son. The Harrows have a dairy farm like others in these parts, and they roll in butter now, but they let the cows go dry every winter and buy powdered milk and margarine till the spring."

Huon would have like to learn more of this strange proceeding, but the lanky Ginger arrived, with hair more auburn than red, and a pleasant, crooked smile that showed too many teeth, yet somehow lit up his face. He had a rifle with him, and when the great feast was over, and the rabbits were beginning to grow bold in the failing light, the boys took turns in using it.

In the still evening when it was too dark to shoot any more, the fire was made up again, and around another kettle of strong tea they sat yarning. Jimmy said he had first met Ginger in South Australia.

"That's right, up country near Watervale. That time I reckoned I'd go in for your beekeeping racket," said Ginger with his twisted smile. "See, Hu, the fellow over there was for pointing out the latest in cars or the best house in town, an' diggin' me in the ribs to whisper, 'e bought that outta honey!'"

"You should have stuck to bees," Jimmy jibed at him. "Then, as we come through, I could have poked Hu in the ribs and pointed out the Lord Mayor of Sagglily in his fine, new house—"

"—all made of honey!" completed Hu.

"That's right!" Ginger cried delightedly, "'stead of the old weatherboard shanty my dad put up, a bit at a time, fifty years ago. It only holds up because he dares it to fall down."

They talked for a time, until looking around, Hu discovered there was no more daylight, but the Milky Way a-glitter overhead, with Orion sprawled across the heavens to the south; around them the great gum trees had merged together in a solid blackness—except where the campfire threw a lurid glow of red upon the tree trunks.

In such a setting their talk somehow grew less light, Ginger explaining quite seriously why he would not have an apiary in Tasmania.

"No fun losing your bees from disease that they go on catching from a neighbor's couple of boxes all the time, is it? They don't allow that sort of thing on the Other Side."

"I know, but *my* bees are clean."

"Huh! You got no neighbors with bees."

"Is this the Isle of Wight disease I've heard about in England?"

"No, Hu, it's called 'foul brood.' And look, Ginger," Jimmy continued, "that's a poor excuse for going out of bees. Don't cows get diseases?"

"Yeah, but I'm not too struck on cows, neither. Sheep—they're the thing."

Hu, much interested in the argument, asked, "Don't you need a terrific lot of money to go in for sheep?"

"Not if you're a young chap, willing to start small."

Of course, you have to learn your trade. I reckon the best thing is to take a job on a big place even if you can only go in shearing time—like me. I did it last season. Twelve thousand acres and they run four thousand cross-bred Merinos. I missed out this season—Dad couldn't spare me—but—with luck—I'll get there again, next."

"What place was it?" asked Jimmy idly.

"Cottlestone—belonging to old Seward."

"Gosh! That's where Hu is going after Christmas as jackaroo!"

They discussed this agreeable coincidence at length, Huon plying Ginger with questions, and telling of his day at Cottlestone, when he had been shown around by Neal Seward.

"I didn't know the Boss went to England for a trip—he'd have put you straight in the shed, sweeping up. That's the place to learn. Neal did wrong to keep you fooling around instead of starting straight in," was Ginger's verdict.

"What did you do for a start?"

"Me?—whatever the wool classer said. He's boss in the shearing shed, you know."

"How do they class wool, exactly? Neal said the classer had to judge the quality of the fleece."

"That's right. He goes by the number of crimps to an inch, but I didn't see much of that. When I got the chance I had a go with the shears. There's an old fellow there, been shearing at Cottlestone for over forty years and he let me have a go, sometimes, on the side."

"What do the shearers earn?" asked Jimmy.

"Good money. This old man could still do a hundred sheep a day, and when I was there they paid over seven pounds a hundred."

"Do you mean he earned over seven pounds *a day*?" asked Hu in astonishment.

"Yeah. More now. They work eight hours a day for five days a week. Get well fed, too."

"That's better than selling a few pounds of honey, eh, Jimmy?"

"A few pounds! I might sell a couple of tons at the fixed price to retail at a shilling and a halfpenny! Work that sum out, son, and see where it gets you! With wool, too, the price is up and down like a temperature chart. Now honey—"

"Oh! I know once it used to be fourpence a pound—you're telling me! But—"

"It seems to me," Huon said, quieting the belligerents, "I ought to have both sheep *and* bees, if I want to make a fortune!"

"Not a bad idea, either," Ginger agreed.

"Yeah, if you've got a place that suits bees, where you can run sheep too, and—" he said, with a laugh, "a bit of help in the rush season from somebody doing the same, so's you don't either of you have to pay out seven pounds a day to bust the firm with a payroll."

It was as still and tranquil as ever when they went to escort Ginger down the track, and the stars blazed brighter against a backdrop of night blue. Returning,

Jimmy carefully covered the warm ashes of their fire against dew and stood a minute looking around, before crawling under the tent fly.

"It's been a camp to remember, this," Huon said, "even if the little so-and-so's haven't yet fetched in the honey. I'm awfully glad about Ginger—I feel quite different, somehow, about going to work at Cottlestone now that I know him. Hope he does turn up for shearing."

"Sure to, because he wants to show you the ropes. Well, we'll get him over again when we return to take the honey. Yeah, it's been a good camp. And we can take it easy tomorrow, since we've nothing much to pack into the old bus."

They took it easy to the point of ambling down the coast, stopping for frequent swims to cool themselves from the heat of the day, so easy that it was already afternoon when Jimmy drew up for some needed gas at the store in Sandy Creek.

"I'll fill her right up, so's Unk can't complain," he told Hu, who left him and went to collect the mail.

"Nothing for Stones," the rabbit-faced but flirtatious young girl told him in the post-office section of the store. "Mr. Stone was in for the mail this morning. Oh, isn't it hot?" She jerked her plucked eyebrows at him as she said, "All *your* letters have gone up to Fipwood, as usual. I'd have hung on to them if you'd have said—but not knowing—"

"Were there many?"

"Let's see—there was an air letter, overweight, and some Christmas cards from England, and one might have been from a girl friend—was you expecting one?"

He got away at last. "My mail has gone to Fipwood," he told Jimmy. "I'll collect it and join you as soon as possible." Thinking of his birthday letters, he did not at once notice Jimmy's face; when he did, he asked quickly, "What's up?"

"I heard something while you and Peggy were jawing away in there." Leaning out, he lowered his voice so that it came only to Huon's ear. "They left three days ago!"

"Who left?" asked Hu stupidly—then realized as soon as he had spoken.

"Lloyd and Gina, with the rest of your sweet cousins, and Ernie—in that yacht we saw at Swansea, the *Ventura*."

"Quick work," Hu grinned. "Destination unknown?"

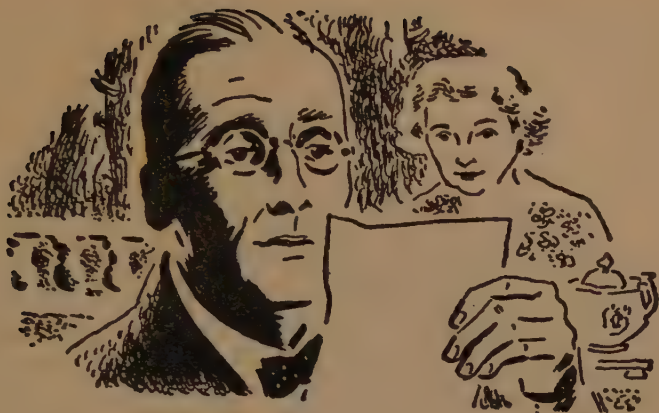
"That's right—no one actually saw them go. A fellow called Jacko Burlington seems to own the yacht and he took them off early one morning."

"Three days!—it gives them a big start, doesn't it?"

"Yeah. We'd better get home and see Unk about the boat and give chase, hadn't we?"

Hu nodded, but he added, "If they've a three days' start I don't think one hour's extra delay will matter. I'd like to see if Aunt Myrtie is all right, and of course I want to collect my letters, so I'll call at Fipwood just the same. You drive home. I won't be long after you!"

He turned and sprinted toward Fipwood.



XVII

"Something to Your Advantage"

AT Fipwood, Huon's aunt was entertaining a guest. "How I love these old colonial homes!" said Mr. Burlington, Senior, strolling on the broken terrace. "Please allow me to poke around a little on my own, Mrs. Gogud—if you insist upon giving me tea, and will not allow me to help you prepare it. I had no intention of giving you this trouble. We realized suddenly that this would be my last opportunity for calling before we go to Ross, to stay with friends until Jacko returns. Cecily said to tell you how much she regretted being unable to accompany me today."

"You must bring her next time you come this way. I

am only so sorry that you find me, not only bereft of my children—which you can understand, since your son has carried them away!—but the friend who is keeping me company till they return, Thelma Merrimen. She has gone for a long walk this afternoon, taking advantage of the lovely sunshine after the cold snap lately, but she will be so disappointed to have missed you. Well, then, I will do as you suggest and leave you to amuse yourself. The old pigeon cote is considered rather fine. It's through there, to the left."

Happily the kitchen fire was still going, and it was not long before Hu's aunt had arranged a dainty tea on a table shaded by pines at the end of the terrace. Here Mr. Burlington joined her.

"It's certainly a fine old place," he said, "full of history. Haven't I heard there was an attack once by bush-rangers? The notorious Mathew Brady, wasn't it?"

"I've heard my father tell the story, but it wasn't terribly exciting, really. Yes, the house was held up at dark, but a freed servant climbed out of the cellar window and slipped into the bush where he fired a gun. The attackers thought they were surrounded, and quickly galloped away. Also, there is nothing to prove Brady was the bushranger."

"Let it be Brady, Mrs. Gogud! If you have no evidence to the contrary—I speak as a lawyer!—why cheat the romantic of their cherished illusions? There are few enough of these old homes left nowadays, for Brady to have attacked."

"No one wants them, now," she answered as she poured out tea, "for there is too much work and expense needed to keep them up, and they are so very inconvenient. Much as I love the old home, I often wish I could sell it and take the children elsewhere. Did you say 'no sugar'?"

"Thank you!" He held his cup thoughtfully for a moment. "That's most interesting . . . I wonder, now . . . I'm in touch with a good many people. If you really mean it, perhaps I could find you a buyer?"

"I do mean it, Mr. Burlington! I am not too strong, myself, and I am beginning to find it a great burden, living here. My children would hate to leave Fipwood, I know, yet they must have more opportunities, especially Gina, who is a dear girl and so good to me. I feel she is tied by the leg at a time when she should be free to roam a little. I oughtn't to say it perhaps, but they all tell me she is rather a lovely-looking girl."

"So I have heard—and charming, too, I am sure. Yes, I see your point—I should feel the same in your place, I think. But you need not fear that no one wants these old homes now. It just needs the right person with money enough to introduce some modern requirements, such as telephone and electric light. Tell me more about the place."

For some time they discussed Fipwood, and then Mr. Burlington seemed to recollect the object of his visit.

"By the way," he said, "I'm told you have a nephew

staying with you, a son of Dr. Arthur Trivett. Is that correct?"

"He is not here now. He has gone to Cottleston as sheephand, but he has been visiting us. Such a dear boy, so well-mannered and *useful*. Huon did the painting you admired at the front of the house. Won't you have another cup?"

"Er—no, thank you. Would his full name be Huon Arthur Trivett, then?"

"Yes,—his mother was my sister Alice, you know. She died in England—tragically."

"In the war, wasn't it? I heard about it . . . so terribly sad." He paused, and then continued, "Now, let me explain my curiosity. Until I discovered the connection with yourself I had no idea who this Dr. Trivett was, and the firm have been trying to trace him. Naturally, in the sad circumstances, the address he left failed to locate him. I hate to revive these painful memories for you, Mrs. Gogud, but the fact is some deeds have been left on our hands. The boy, Huon—is he the only—er—survivor?"

She nodded, gazing away through the pine trees. "Yes, Hu was only a small child when it happened. Some good friends named Writhen took him—oh!"—she broke off, leaning forward to see better—"there is someone coming up the drive! My sight isn't very good, but—"

"It's a young man, rather dark, with broad shoulders—no hat—running—"

Before Mr. Burlington could complete his catalog,

Hu was on the terrace and greeting his aunt. Then, as she introduced the slight, gray-haired man who watched him so keenly, as a Mr. Burlington, Huon looked at him with particular interest.

"Do you own the yacht *Ventura*, sir?"

"Yes, in point of fact, though my boy Jack is the one who uses her these days. As Kipling puts it, ' . . . whoever pays the taxes, old Mus Hobden owns the land!' I surmise you know Jack has set out on a great expedition with a gay young party of your cousins?" he said, with a smile.

"Er—yes, but I saw her a week or so ago, at Swansea."

His aunt broke in, "Such a pity, Hu, you aren't free for any of these junketings in the holidays! How do you like it at Cottlestone? Tell me all about it—no! talk to Mr. Burlington, first—then I can make fresh tea. No, no, dear boy—I'd rather you stayed here, and let me go. We were talking about you just before you happened to walk in, and he has something to tell you. I hope," she called brightly as she left, "it is what you legal people call 'something to your advantage'!"

"And—is it?" asked Hu smiling, as he found himself a seat.

The formal little man crossed his legs and clasped his hands round a knee before he replied slowly, "I doubt, these days, if you will consider the possession of a small, rugged island of about thirty acres extent of any great advantage to you; but your father left the deeds with

us—Burlington, Ross, and Burlington—to be completed when the title deeds to the land—”

“Excuse me,” Hu interrupted urgently, “but do you mean my father left me an island?”

“More exactly, he acquired one, which, presumably, you inherit if you wish to claim it. There are certain sums to be paid for rates and taxes outstanding—not very heavy, certainly. But, as I have been explaining to Mrs. Gogud, we were unable to—er—trace your father at the address in England—” he continued with legal technicalities till his hostess reappeared, unaware that Hu was not really listening but gazing into the future and dreaming dreams.

“Aunt Myrtie, I own an island!” he greeted her wildly, as he took the tray from her hands.

“Do you, dear boy? Well, I expect it’s the one I told you your father was so interested in. Now, Mr. Burlington—it’s freshly made. Won’t you have another cup?”

“An island, Aunt Myrtie!”

“Yes, yes—but have your tea, Hu. You mustn’t imagine these little islands off the coast are worth much. They are mostly just rock, aren’t they, Mr. Burlington?”

“Some carry a limited number of sheep—I believe this one did at one time, years ago, when someone tried to make a home there. Nowadays sheep are too valuable to leave on islands, unless the islands are inhabited. I am told boats have a way of calling in—and the sheep all disappear.”

“So you mustn’t be too excited about it,” said his aunt

with a glance at Hu's radiant face. "There's no fortune in it. Why are you so pleased?"

"I've always wanted to own an island. He—my father must have felt the same. Where is it? Has it a name?"

"It's off the coast here, somewhere. I made a note—one moment—" The lawyer took some papers from his pocket and shuffled them through his hands, while Hu sat silent, his excited thoughts far away.

"Ah, here we have it, now—my glasses . . ."

With a paper held close to his nose, he recited tonelessly, "Trivett—Conveyance—Indenture . . . er, yes . . . the island lies north east of Schouten Island, can be seen on clear days through the Schouten Passage. Charted as Green End Island. Extent approximately—"

"Green End Island?" cried Hu, "but—!"

"That's the name!—I couldn't think," said his aunt. "That's where your father used to go with the old man who had been a sailor—a Scandinavian, named Olaf. I never knew he bought it, actually, though Stella told me once he wanted to buy it, for it had quite a fascination for him. Now, you haven't eaten any of my best cake, Hu!"

"I—thank you so much, Aunt Myrtie, but I only looked in to see how you were, and I'll have to cut along now, I'm afraid. I—I must go . . ."

"Are they waiting for you? Oh dear! Well, you must come again as soon as you can. I'm so glad you are all right over there, dear boy, and happy!"

Hu gave her a startled glance, and wondered, as the

lawyer took down Mark Writhen's address and some other particulars, whether to tell her he was not at Cottlestone. The explanation would be too difficult before a stranger, he decided, and it was impossible at present to fix his mind on anything but the dry old lawyer's astounding news.

"Christian name, Mark—did you say? Thank you . . . thank you. It may be some time, you understand, before the matter is finally settled . . . however . . ."

Was the old tortoise trying to drag it out as long as possible? Hu wondered, in his burning impatience to be gone. Couldn't they realize the whole world was changed for him now that he owned—he *owned* an island?

Hugging the glorious news to himself, he got away at last, and ran in frenzied haste all the way to the farm—ran fast, but his thoughts raced faster, opening up new realms to his imagination as the island he claimed began to master him.

Little wonder he forgot his letters, leaving them still on the hall table at Fipwood, unaware that one contained certain information about his own property, Green End.



XVIII

With a Small Boat in Pursuit

THE two boys did not waste much time at the Stones' farm; Jimmy had scarcely handed back the truck before Hu arrived with his news, and next day they left for Green End Island.

"Gosh!—you look as though you'd won first prize in a contest!" Jimmy remarked, watching as Huon set a course for the Schouten Passage in the clumsy little dinghy with the much-patched sail. "I feel as though I haven't been to bed for a week, but you didn't get half the sleep I did."

"It was enough. I can sleep after we've hoisted a 'no

trespassers' sign on"—he paused and said the name almost reverently—"Green End."

"Suppose the trespassers have already made off with the loot? Do we have to give chase in this rotten little tub?"

"And fire a broadside into the *Ventura*? Hardly! I don't know what we do in that case. Demand a share, I suppose, or threaten legal proceedings? To tell the truth, Jimmy, I'm not so—so—"

"—so stuck on the gold? I've noticed that. You're a rum un, if ever there was one. Crazy—plumb crazy!"

With a hand caressing the tiller, Hu glanced down at his friend sprawled in the bows, and grinned, "It's the idea of this island that's got me," he explained simply. "I've been reading the diary my dad wrote, all over again and—I feel I know every yard of the island. Must be a grand spot in a storm—the breakers roll in, non-stop from New Zealand to dash against the eastern cliffs with more than a thousand miles of momentum."

"It's all cliffs—from what I've heard. That's the trouble."

"There's one break to the south, protected by Schouten Island, where rocks curve round to form a bit of a breakwater. Cray Claw Rocks. You can climb the cliffs there from a bit of a beach. On top," he continued dreamily, talking as much to himself as his friend, "on top it must be like landing on Mars—a world of its own; to the west the mainland and other islands, otherwise nothing but seal"

“And a wind, I bet, that never stops trying to blow you off your bit of rock into the drink.”

“No, there’s a depression in the middle like a saucer, sheltered, which he says is always green. There’s a rivulet of sorts there and some rocky pools even in summer, with green grass round. Isn’t that how it got its name—Green End?—but there’s a good fringe of trees, too, and a bit of a hillock to the west that helps protect it from wind.”

Jimmy yawned. “We’ve come a good long stretch in the time since we left the Cove; at this rate we’ll soon have crossed the bay. I think I’ll have a little shut-eye before I start feeling seasick. Wake me up if you want any help—not that I’ll be much use to you,” said Jimmy, closing his eyes comfortably and shading his face from the strong sunlight.

Hu chuckled at the mention of seasickness in such weather; he only wished there was a stronger breeze to buffet them the sooner to his island—not that the dinghy was capable of much speed. He glanced with a smile at the improvised boom, a green sapling cut from the bush, and the clumsy patches and lashings. If only Felicity could see him now!

“I say!”

“Unh?” grunted Jimmy.

“I forgot to collect my letters after all!”

“Unh!—not surprised, the state you were in, pal. Relax!—they don’t deliver mail to Green End—yet! When you are king there, it will be different. Good night!”

Some time later, bearing down for the Passage, Hu glimpsed through the opening the stark outline of cliffs rising high from a blue sea, and he knew with surging excitement that he had seen his promised land. At the same time, navigation became tricky as the great weather-beaten sides of rock stole the breeze, leaving barely enough steerageway to make the Passage.

"Wake up, Jim—you've got to row!"

"Gosh!—where are we?" He blinked a moment at a rocky wall appearing almost close enough to touch, and then hastily got to work.

Schouten Island, which had looked so craggy and romantic from the other side of the bay, seemed grim and sinister towering above their feeble craft; but at last Huon felt the sail swell, and heard the slap and chuckle of the bow wave as they pressed ahead, clear of danger.

"Next time, I wish you'd start up the engine," Jimmy teased, with a backward glance at the walls they had passed between, and he gave a mocking shudder.

"What are you grumbling for?" demanded Hu with sparkling eyes. "Plenty of breeze, now we're in open sea!" They were in fact skimming along at a good pace, with the slight roll peculiar to the boat becoming intensified.

"Too much open sea for me."

Reaction, and the sight of his island close before them, had a curious effect on Hu. He sang—none too tune-fully—and waved his free arm around, while he declaimed scraps of verse he didn't know he knew.

"Aw, stop it! You make me feel worse," protested Jimmy.

" 'The sea, the sea! The open sea!

The blue, the fresh, the ever free!' "

Suddenly he stopped and pointed ahead. A curving line of rocks was visible below the face of Green End and from behind them stuck up the mast of a sailing ship.

"Well, it's what I expected," said Jimmy after a long look. "I told you that little tike Perky Taft said it was here *Ventura* was making for."

"I don't know how he found out. Did anyone else see them leave?"

"No, but he and another kid watched them leave at sunrise; then, he said he 'borrowed' a telescope—probably swiped the one the old Dane has in his shack—and followed them across the bay with it. When he couldn't see any more he climbed Windy Hill behind our place—I told you that you can see Green End from there, sometimes, and he watched them put in."

"Nothing to stop them putting out again, later? However, there they are, all right. Question: what does 'A' do now?"

" 'A' sails in after, and orders them off. It strikes me if they've been here three days—let's see, this is the fourth—they can't have found much treasure."

"True, O king, live forever!—but suppose they say, 'I'm the king of the castle! Get down, you pair of intruding so-and-so rascals!'"

"Unless anyone happens to be leaning over the cliff this side—which isn't likely—I doubt if we'll be seen. We can haul her into safety—or anchor—"

"The kedge is a pretty poor affair. We'd better pull her up the beach above high-water mark. Then, if there's no one aboard the *Ventura*—and it doesn't look like it—we might sneak up as you say, and perhaps interview the party as they enjoy an afternoon siesta in camp."

"That's the ticket."

A little later, with the Cray Claw rocks before them and the cliffs towering over a tiny beach, clearly to be seen, they conferred again.

"There's a curious gash in the cliff on the east side of the beach—see it?" asked Hu. "It's in line with the biggest Cray Rock and shows white against all this basalt stuff. Might be the limestone ravine he mentioned in the diary. It was shown on the map, too."

"Yes, could be. Certainly the only way to reach the top is by that broken bit below the white gash. Probably you arrive on top at the gash," said Jimmy, his eyes screwed up as he studied the wall before them.

"I'm sure if anyone is aboard the cutter he is dead or asleep," Huon said. "All the same—you know how sound carries over water—perhaps we had better not speak again. Eat some sandwiches now, for we may not have much chance later. Be ready to jump in the water and shove at the last. All set?"

"All set!" whispered Jimmy.

The fourth day of treasure seeking had dawned on Green End with still no sign of treasure and the rank and file were growing impatient, though Lloyd still had the wholehearted support of Tacky in the search. After breakfast Jacko, who absented himself fishing each day, and tactfully never asked on his return what luck they had had, invited those who wished, to come with him to haul in crayfish.

"I've found a spot," he said, "where they're as big as I've ever caught them; and there's a crack in the cliffs away to the north where it's possible to get down and fish from the rocks. They'd be welcome for Christmas parties this weather with salad—crays—thought I'd take a load back. What are your plans, Lloyd? Would it suit to pack up camp today?"

"Today!—it's a bit mean, isn't it, to spring it on me like this?" cried Lloyd indignantly. "Just when Tacky and I are on a clue, too!"

There was a moment's silence, even Gina feeling that Lloyd had been on too many clues without result.

"Look, old man," said Ernie, who was getting very bored with treasure hunting, "I think the old Dane was too drunk to know *what* he said to you. Or there may be another gash like this one, on another island. We've lined the Claw Rocks up, as you said, with the white mark, and gone all round them in the dinghy. You know yourself you've searched the cliff face from a rope, and there isn't so much as a pocket where any stuff could have been planted, is there?"

"The Dane was perfectly clear; he said look out for something at the white mark, in a sort of open cave. I admit I made a mistake in starting to look from the bottom of the cliff first, but I was reasoning it would be too heavy for a man who'd been shipwrecked to stagger to the top with all that gold. But he probably took days to do it, carrying a little each time."

"But we looked round the white part too," protested Prosper. "It was only limestone showing a bit where water had washed over it, and all that thick bush below."

"You are such a lazy little devil," Lloyd answered, "you didn't bother to see what was *under* the scrub, did you? That's what's wasted our time. However, you go along with Jacko if you want, Ernie. In a few hours now I expect we'll be on to it."

"Then," said Jacko, wrinkles of humor crinkling around his eyes though he appeared unmoved by what was said, "if you will have found what you want in a couple of hours or so, we may as well break camp now, and then get the fish."

"I'll pack up the things and join you later, Lloyd!" Gina offered.

"Right! Come along, Pros and Tacky!" Lloyd scowled, none too pleased.

"Better help get the tents stowed first," suggested Jacko; but Lloyd, suddenly deaf, did not look back, and the boys were already out of sight.

Later Ernie and Jacko lugged the tents to the beach and stowed them aboard. They passed Lloyd and Tacky

working to lengthen a green tunnel they were cutting. It began where the rough cliff path emerged on top and ran back toward the limestone outcrop.

"Nearly as hot work as moving tents?" suggested Jacko cheerfully.

Lloyd did not reply directly, though he mentioned later to Tacky that he didn't think much of Jack Burlington and his "weak wit."

As they moved back to gather up nets and fishing gear from the camp, Jacko asked Ernie where Pros had got to. "He wasn't with Lloyd, so he might have made himself useful getting us bait."

"From what I've seen of Pros, he doesn't go much on making himself useful to anyone but Pros!" Ernie confided, a trifle bitterly.

It was true Pros didn't see the fun in helping to hack down a tangle of ti-tree scrub and ferns in a narrow ravine on a sweltering hot day. If Lloyd and Tacky were too excited crawling down their tunnel to notice that he was not following, so much the better. He would amuse himself looking for gulls' eggs along the cliff, keeping close enough to the scene of labor to dash back when Tacky shouted—as he would be unable to help doing if they found anything interesting.

He mooched away first to a shady spot and had a quiet nap. Returning to the ravine, he decided he hadn't been missed and the path-cutters had reached some snag they were attacking with an ax, so he moved off again,

making for the cliff above the place where the *Ventura* rode at anchor. Above the beach, he remembered, the steep cliff appeared to overhang slightly, on top: a good place to look down for nests.

A cloud of sea gulls were wheeling excitedly as he approached, and he thought this a good sign. A little too frightened to walk boldly to the edge he dropped on hands and knees and crawled there, finally stretching himself out and pulling himself the last yard till he could see over. . . . What he saw made him almost dizzy with excitement.

There, below him, was a small, gray boat, lacking paint, being hauled up the beach as silently as possible by Huon and Jimmy Stone, both wet to the waist. The noise of the keel rasping on the shingle was partly lost in the sound of waves gently breaking on the beach, or splashing round the rocks, and the breeze that was flapping and worrying at the brim of Pros's hat. With a hasty movement he snatched it off and stuffed it down a crack, realizing that should one of the two below glance up, it would betray him like a flag.

Huon and Jimmy were too busy to glance up—yet. By signs and whispers they got the sail stowed away neatly on top of their gear and the painter hitched to firm rock. When all was shipshape, Hu extracted the diary, showed it with a smile to Jimmy, and pushed it deep into his pocket.

Up above, Pros fairly licked his lips. All the time he had watched them he had gloated, feeling that now the

enemy was being delivered into his hand. A sweet revenge—and one that would appear mere accident—lay close in the shape of a sizable round rock. No one could ever prove he had been this way—rocks fell—people shouldn't leave their boats directly underneath. With a smashed boat they were prisoners on the island—at the mercy of Lloyd. In fancy he saw Hu humbly showing him where the treasure lay—being forced to lug it down to the beach, too, as part of his punishment. Those two would be slaves on the island . . . to jump around when Prosper Gogud cracked the whip! Oh, it was perfect! And the treasure—it must be there after all, or they would not have come to Green End like this, sneaking around after it.

Enjoying delicious thoughts, Pros only just slid away in time before Jimmy, ready for the climb, stepped out to survey the cliff and pick out the path to the top. Racing back to the ravine, Prosper crawled a little way into the tunnel where Lloyd and Tacky were talking excitedly as they hacked.

"I say, Lloyd!" Prosper broke in on them, "I was throwing some of these saplings out of your road over the cliff like you told me, and—there's someone landed on the beach!"

"What's he saying?" Lloyd asked. "Give a hand here, Tacky—in another few minutes we'll be through. There's no doubt it's a cave of sorts in there—"

"Quick!" cried Pros, losing patience. "They're sneaking up on you from the beach!"

"Who are?" Lloyd asked, pausing at last to listen.

"Hu and Jimmy Stone! I can see them—they're climbing up—they'll be here in ten minutes!"

His news penetrated at last, and Lloyd and Tacky backed out in violent haste. Blinking in the strong light, they decided first of all to reconnoiter.

By the time they had confirmed the news Pros brought, Lloyd had a plan of action mapped out. "Cut along both of you as fast as you know, to the camp. Tell Gina to come. Bring the two sacks we fetched the bread in; and rope—plenty of rope! Be quick!" He turned back to prepare an ambush.

"You can go to the camp, Tacky," instructed Pros, "and fetch the junk. I'm going to keep my eye on them."

"But Lloyd said—"

"Look, who found out they were coming? But for me—! Get going!"

"Oh, all right!" Tacky raced away as bidden.

Reaching the selected spot again, Prosper squinted over. Huon, leading, was passing out of sight to the left around a pillar of rock. Soon Jimmy disappeared from sight, too.

Crawling back a little, Pros collected his big stone and rolled it carefully to the edge exactly above where the beached boat was lying. With careful judgment he shoved it the last few inches, his heart leaping as his efforts were rewarded by a dull thud, and a sound of splintering wood. Not daring to gloat longer, he fled back to Lloyd, hugging his secret to himself.



XIX

"This Is My Island"

THE sun beat mercilessly on the bare rock, and sweat dripped from their chins as Hu and Jimmy climbed the cliff. In single file they pulled themselves up the last rough section, seeing nothing but the next foothold and the whirling sea gulls disturbed from their ledges.

Stepping into a narrow crack with blue sky close above it, they felt they were almost on top. Here, just as Hu was turning for a word with Jimmy, they were neatly trapped. Something dropped from above, enveloping their heads and shoulders, while their arms were seized and pinioned tight behind their backs.

It was all done quickly and quietly, with just a warn-

ing, "Don't move! Don't resist—or you'll go over and drown!" Then they were dragged upward by what felt like dozens of hands, until their feet told them they were on top at last, and their bruised knees had relief.

Pushed and led onward, to an accompaniment of whoops and giggles, they were finally bound firmly to a couple of trees, and the bags removed from their heads.

Action can be very sudden, but thought is quicker: Hu was not the least surprised, when his head emerged from the stifling bag, to find his four cousins looking at him triumphantly.

"Old Hu's got the sack now, all right!" gloated Tacky.

"Thanks for sneaking after us like this," said Gina with deep sarcasm.

"Trespassing again?" Lloyd inquired of Jimmy, "—like your uncle tried to do on Dad's land?"

"Trespassing? What are *you* doing? Know who owns this island?" Jimmy snorted.

"No, and don't care!" said Prosper. But Lloyd looked hard at Hu. "I suppose you imagine you do, my sweet cousin, just because Barb found you that map."

"As a matter of fact, I do. That's what I came to tell you," said Hu quietly, as he tried to wipe his wet face on the shoulder of his shirt.

There was a burst of mocking laughter and cries of "Sez you?"

"You don't have to believe it," he said wearily, for he was very tired. "If you want to behave like kids playing bandits I suppose we can't prevent you—at the moment."

"Oh, does Mummie's little boy want to ring for the police?" someone jeered. Lloyd stopped further sport by demanding the map; Prosper, who had said least, walked up to the tree, then without hesitation put his hand in one of Hu's bulging pockets, and with the air of a conjurer performing a simple trick produced the diary and handed it to Lloyd.

Ignoring their captives, they crowded around with excited chatter, till a yell, followed by a breathless silence, made it clear they had found what they sought. Hu could see Lloyd was fairly dancing with joy. "*It is—it is!*" he cried. "Can't be anywhere else but here—look at the shape—look at the Cray rocks! It's Green End. I knew I was right!"

"Here's the bit of writing I told you about," said Gina, forgetting, or not caring, that Hu listened.

"Where?" Lloyd snatched the book and read aloud, his voice shaking slightly from emotion, "'Climbed on top by the cliff path, if it can be called a path, to view the whole island. Everything is there—in miniature. To the west—' oh, I'll skip this bit '. . . The stream, such as it is, must lose itself down the limestone ravine—'" He broke off to cry triumphantly, "That's our gully, Tacky!"

"Go on! Read more!"

" 'I returned there to explore further, scarcely expecting to find treasure—' "

"Treasure!" they echoed.

" '. . . but looking up, saw what was hidden in the

cleft! A fortune for the brave—but have I the courage—’ ”

“Go on! Go on!” they urged, and Tacky yelled, “Up with the Goguds!”

“That’s all. That’s the end of the darn book.”

“I told you,” said Gina. “I said there was something about *courage*—and you said it didn’t need courage, it needed a spade to dig up treasure.”

Lloyd was not listening to her; he threw the diary on the ground. “Come on, we know all we want. Tacky and I would have found it anyhow in another ten minutes—we were just on to it. I distinctly saw something dark ahead in a sort of cave. Pros, you and Gina stay outside. There’s not enough room for us all, and you can keep an eye on these two—” he indicated Hu and Jimmy. “Come on, Tacky! We’ll soon show ’em the stuff!”

The two disappeared into the green tunnel.

Hu struggled with his bonds, his smoldering anger roused to fury by the sight of his father’s diary in the dust; his one desire now was to fight Lloyd.

“Look out!” warned Gina, seeing his shoulders move.

“Ah, no you don’t!” said Prosper, sauntering over with another piece of rope and tying it above the one that was already binding Huon to the tree.

From inside the tunnel came a murmur of excited talk and the sound of an ax at work. Both Gina and Prosper disappeared into the entrance in an effort to see what was going on.

Huon twisted his head around till he could see Jimmy;

they exchanged a rather hopeless shake of the head, though Jimmy showed that he was trying to fray through the rope around his legs, and Hu tried it, too.

Occupied in this way, they were quite unaware of the approach of others, till a strange voice said in tones of astonishment, "What's going on here?" and a six-foot man strode up, his blue eyes glittering in his tanned face as he demanded, "Who tied you two up like this?"

Huon glanced toward the tunnel—but if they heard the question, Gina and Pros preferred to remain concealed. He realized this must be Jacko Burlington, and that he must make some reply. He plunged in quickly, to forestall Jimmy's truthful account—for after all, the Goguds were not Jimmy's kith and kin.

"It's quite all right—a sort of game!" Huon assured the stranger cheerfully. "Do you mind giving me that little book on the ground? In my pocket, please. Thanks. Oh, yes—untie us now, if you don't mind: the game's over. Aren't you Burlington—skipper of the *Ventura*? I'm Hu Trivett—and this is my friend Jimmy Stone."

Jacko appeared to accept the explanation. "How did you get here—swim?" he asked, as he released them deftly. Huon laughed and described Unk's fishing dinghy, drawn up on the beach.

"We're on our way there now, with a good catch," Jacko told him, showing a net full of crayfish. "Here's Ernie Seward with some more," he added as a second fisherman appeared with his load.

Hu's one concern was to hurry Jacko on down the cliff

with Ernie, so as to be free to settle accounts with Lloyd; but before Ernie's questions could be answered a burst of excited cries drew all eyes to the tunnel.

"What's going on in there?" demanded Jacko, and for answer came a shriek and cry of pain. They all stood electrified, as more cries rang out with sounds of a frenzied commotion. Then, with a squeal, Gina burst from the tunnel, her hands to her face.

"What is it—a snake?" Ernie dropped his nets of fish and ran toward her, shouting, "Are you bitten?"

"Yes!"

Aghast, they all hurried toward her—only to meet the impact of Lloyd and the two boys as they, too, charged from the tunnel. Shrieks, moans, and lurid imprecations made it impossible to know what had really happened. Huon, nearly knocked down, was thrown against Jimmy—to discover he was shaking—not with fright—shaking, actually shaking—with laughter!

"Can't you see?" He clutched Hu and rolled about with mirth. "They've run—their silly heads—into wild bees—look at them!"

"It's only bees, is it?" asked Jacko, overhearing. "I wondered how Gina managed to get a snake to bite her on the nose." He shut the open knife in his hand and slipped it back in his pocket, with a sigh of relief.

But on Hu's mind a great light was breaking: while his cousins were dancing around in pain, tearing at their clothes and slapping at real and imaginary bees, he thumped Jimmy and shouted in his ear, "Remember

the words!—remember? ‘*See what’s hidden in the cleft . . .*’—remember?—‘*Nothing short of a fortune for the brave*’ . . .—remember?”

“Yeah, I remember! Lemme go! There may be a fortune there, all right,” Jimmy rubbed his shoulder blade ruefully. “I didn’t say there wasn’t, did I?”

The cyclone centered around Lloyd, his arms flailing as he dodged around a small sapling, his face contorted by fear. Gina, her own looks ruined by a grossly bulging nose and upper lip, wept for her brother.

“Can’t you help him? Can’t you help him?” she sobbed to Ernest; and in that moment Hu admired and almost liked his cousin. As for Ernest, he turned angrily on Jimmy. “I thought you knew about bees? Why don’t you *do* something then?” he demanded.

“Why should I?”

“Because—why, because”—he seemed bewildered by Jimmy’s callous reply—“Lloyd might die from the poison of all those stings!”

“He won’t.” Nevertheless Jimmy strolled across to the afflicted one, who was swiping the air, and explained that if he looked for the stings instead of milling around, and tweaked each one out without running the poison further in, the pain would be much less severe.

“I didn’t ask for a lecture on beekeeping!” shouted Lloyd ungratefully. “Get rid of these bees! There’s one still around me—*ow!*—he’s in my shirt!”

“Strip it off, then!” said Jimmy, and jerked it over

Lloyd's head. Examining it, he pounced with his hand. "Ah, it *is* a bee! Here it is, not hurt at all—see?"

"Kill it—kill it!" Lloyd recoiled in horror from the tiny insect held carefully between Jimmy's finger and thumb. "Kill it quickly!" he roared, "before it stings me again!"

"It hasn't stung you once, yet; and it can't sting twice. Don't you know, when one of the poor brutes has to sting someone it tears out half its inside? You've already caused the death of about twelve bees—bees that were doing you no harm."

"Shut up! Oh—make him put his foot on it, someone! Make him swallow it—anything—twelve stings!"

"You don't feel half as bad as the unfortunate bees who had to sting you. How would you like it if some fool came blundering in—hello!" he broke off abruptly, staring at the bee he was holding, and signaled to Huon. "Come and look at this! Three gold bands—what d'you make of that?"

"Good lord!—Italians, aren't they?"

"I'll say!—and a pure strain, I think. Whoever came here to settle must have fetched in good stock. Now, what do they feed on—"

"Can't you leave that beastly bee and do something for the stings?" cried Ernest heatedly. "Here's Gina with an awful one on her face, and it's swelling like anything, and look at Tacky's arm! Lloyd has enough to kill an ox, and there's Pros—"

"Let's see!" Jimmy carefully stowed his bee away in a

matchbox before dealing with the stings. "Pros hasn't any—only imaginitis," he announced after a few minutes, "and there is nothing more here that I can do. If you had any carbonate of soda—"

"We have—I packed some for making scones," said Gina. "It's up at the camp."

"Tell them what to do with it, Jim," Jacko broke in impatiently. "They can attend to the stings and then collect the rest of the gear and follow down to the *Ventura*. I'm sailing pronto."

"What's that?" asked Lloyd, who had been examining himself and gingerly putting on his shirt again. "We aren't going today, Jacko!"

"Oh?" Jacko's voice was dangerously quiet.

"Well, what do you expect—with faces like balloons? We'd never live it down. Besides—" Lloyd's eyes strayed toward the opening of the tunnel.

"Oh no!" said Tacky, following his thought, "I think we'd better not go now, Lloyd."

"You were thinking—the bees might have quieted down tomorrow?" suggested Hu gently. "And the treasure—"

"You don't get me in there again!" cried Lloyd with a shudder. "But if anyone—" he shot a glance at Jimmy—"er, understands bees and—er—would like to—"

"—to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for you?" Hu's voice was even more silky.

"Of course we'd go shares, and after all, I've done all the spadework," mumbled Lloyd.

"Lloyd," Hu's eyes blazed, though he still spoke quietly, "are you ready to fight now, or must we wait?"

"Don't be a fool!—Jacko, don't let him! Hu's crazy. Look how sick Lloyd is!" cried Gina passionately.

"I'll fight you all right—but not when my head's going round like a Catherine wheel." Lloyd put both hands to his temples, and groaned.

"I think," said Jacko, "you can bless those bees, Lloyd. If you weren't in such a pitiful state Hu might have taught you a thing or two. He looks stocky, and he might have left your face in a worse mess than the bees!"

"Get out!" shouted Lloyd. "If I wasn't so sick, I'd take on the two of you. I'm fed to the teeth. You can keep this old island, and much good may it do you!" Still calling disjointedly, he crashed away in the direction of the camp, Gina after him.

"Thanks," Jimmy flung back at him, "the island belongs to Hu anyhow!"

"Then you didn't come here after the treasure?" asked Jacko, swinging around on Hu. "I thought—" Before Hu had time to explain, Prosper moved to follow the rest back to camp, and Jacko shot out an arm to grab him, interrupting himself to say, "Not you, young gentleman. You can make yourself useful for once."

"No, I *must* go to the camp first—my arm hurts like anything, Jacko!"

"It'll hurt a lot more if you don't pick up those tools, and the two sacks—by the way, what were they used for?—and get down the cliff with them."

“Lloyd! Gina!—don’t leave me with them!” shrieked Prosper; but the others were already out of hearing.

Driven ahead by Jacko, with Hu and Jimmy carrying loads behind, there was no chance for him to escape. He crawled unwillingly toward the beach, with a furtive glance now and then at the boat he had wrecked. From a distance it appeared quite intact. Perhaps, he thought hopefully, no one would look inside it till after the *Ventura* had sailed.



XX

Marooned

WORKING their way down the cliff, Jacko asked various questions and learned about Hu's claim to the island.

"I ought to have known," he said. "I heard Dad making inquiries about you and arranging to have a talk with Mrs. Gogud, but I thought Dr. Trivett's island was some small piece of rock near the coast. I never heard the name of it."

They were hot and thirsty when they reached the beach. Jimmy suggested a drink from the water cask in the beached boat—"Though it will be pretty warm from lying in the sun," he added.

"There's some good lemon drink, quite cold, that we left on the table in the *Ventura*," Prosper informed him quickly.

"Right—let's get over there to it," Jimmy agreed, dropping his unwieldy burden without delay in the small dinghy.

"Hold on a minute," called Huon. "Jacko wants to see the little tub we used to cross the Atlantic," and he led Jacko across as he talked. "I think something could be made of her. She's not a bad little craft—she needs a proper boom of course, and some slats and tackle and a lick of paint—" he checked with a sudden cry and bounded forward. "Look!—look what's happened! Oh—gosh!"

"My godfather!—a rock clean through her bottom!"

Jimmy followed the other two: he said nothing, only whistled his dismay; but Prosper crowded in excitedly, eyes round with amazement, exclaiming, "Gosh! A rock has rolled down the cliff. What bad luck!"

"And it's Unk's boat,"—Jimmy sighed—"And we promised we wouldn't hurt a hair of its head!"

"We can't patch up a hole that size." Hu gazed in consternation at the hole from which he removed the rock. "We've no materials." He stared blankly at Jimmy and asked, "How are we to get away?"

"I've room for extra passengers," Jacko offered as he examined the damage. "It's a nasty gash, and a rib's stove in, but I think we can fix her all right. I'll bring

over a fellow I know to help us—he's a bit of an expert—and what tools we need."

"If you can return, then I'd rather wait here and keep an eye on her—wouldn't you, Jimmy? In case the wind shifts to a southerly and the beach gets awash. We've only a very small kedge," Hu explained.

"I can help you make her fast—but wait here by all means, if you'd rather. I'll return as soon as possible. It'll be a few days though; I can't say exactly when. You can't starve," he added, smiling. "The fishing is too good. What a lucky thing we discovered this before the *Ventura* sailed!"

"I'll say it's lucky!" Jimmy grinned, "—or we might have become two shipwrecked mariners making smoke signals for help!"

"It's awfully good of you to come back for us—" Huon began, but Jacko cut him short. "Oh, that's all right, so long as you are prepared to wait indefinitely. Now," he continued briskly, "I'm a lawyer, and the point I want to follow up next is—how did it happen? I don't believe this rock rolled down by accident. I've walked along the top, and as I remember it, the edge is worn and clear." He moved away, measuring the cliff with his eye . . . estimating . . . considering.

Suddenly he swung around and his eye rested thoughtfully on Prosper. "I suppose you wouldn't know anything about it?" he asked him.

"Me, Jacko? How could I? I swear I didn't—don't! You know I was with Lloyd all the time, helping him

make the tunnel." Straight and innocent, his eyes beneath the film-star lashes stared back at his questioner, the while he protested his ignorance of the whole affair.

Hu watched him, unimpressed. "You seemed to know exactly in which pocket I kept the diary," he suggested shrewdly.

"So he did! He knew just where to look," Jimmy agreed. Prosper, however, stuck to his tale, and could not be shaken into any admission that he had ever left Lloyd, or watched Hu from above.

"I could convict on the falsely innocent expression of your face," Jacko remarked. "However, I'll take a look on top, first. I don't believe big rocks like this are waiting at the edge to roll over. You may have left Lloyd—"

"We didn't, Jacko! Ask Lloyd! Just ask him, if you don't believe me!"

"Or the lot of you may have strolled this way. Or Gina—ah?—Gina wasn't with the rest of you, was she? Come on, we'll take a walk on top and look around. You can carry up a load of stuff for their camp at the same time."

"I don't see—even if it was deliberately done—how we can ever find out who rolled it over," said Hu slowly.

"If no one admits it, you mean? But I'm a lawyer," said Jacko simply, and again ordered the reluctant Pros to load up, and be quick about it.

"Shall we come, too?"

"No need, thanks, Jimmy. Why don't you two row the crays to the *Ventura* and get yourselves something to

eat? Understand a primus stove? Right! Then you can make tea. Pros and I will park your things on the top for you."

Disregarding his tearful protests, Jack drove the unwilling boy up the cliff path once again.

Discussing recent events over a good square meal in the cabin of the *Ventura*, Hu and Jimmy came to the conclusion that Pros was certainly guilty. "But Jacko will never be able to prove it," said Huon. "I'll say this for my cousins, they stick together like glue."

"I bet they were all in on it. They noticed us arrive, thought we would snatch the treasure from under their noses, so they smashed the boat and planned to capture us and remove the map by force. We were stupid not to expect it."

"You don't expect your relations to behave like gangsters," said Hu bitterly. "A nice fix we'd have been in, but for Jacko!"

"Oh, they would have been quite kind to us once they'd got their paws on the loot, you know," Jimmy consoled. "See, some people are like that: they go stark, staring crazy at the thought of grabbing some money they haven't earned. I don't think any punishment you could give Lloyd could be as bad as knowing he's lost the treasure—not that he enjoyed the bee stings, exactly," he added, smiling.

"I don't want to punish any of that lousy crowd—I only want to get rid of them, and never see them again."

"We—el," began Jimmy, and then broke off, listening to shrill screams from the beach. "What's happening?" He raced on deck and looked shoreward, returning to call down the hatch, "It's all right! Only Jacko giving Pros a hiding. He's got him where he has to look at the hole he made in our boat, and is laying it on proper with a rope's end."

"I hope it's the rope he tied around my arms, then; they are still pretty sore. That would be poetic justice," said Hu as he finished tidying up after their meal.

"My word, that kid can yell; I bet it's the first hiding he's ever had. I can see the noise is bringing Gina and the rest full bat down the cliff. Come and look!"

"Umm—as good as television. Hadn't we better get out a lifeboat—for when one of them falls in the sea?"

"I think we'd do well to go ashore ourselves now."

"To provide Jacko with a bodyguard? Right! Hop in the dinghy."

The yells did not subside when they reached the beach, but Gina arrived like a tornado and attacked Jacko with her tongue. "You wouldn't dare—you great bully!—if we were anywhere else but alone here on an island—half-murdering poor little Pros—if you don't stop and let him go, I'll—"

"Does Mummie's little girl want to ring for the police?" Jimmy quoted as he ran up.

"You shut up, Jim Stone!"

Jacko, who took not the slightest notice of her, calmly finished the job in hand. "Now," he said to his victim,

"you can get up and show what you did to this boat—deliberately, with a rock rolled from above. You deserve a great deal worse than I've given you."

"There's going to be trouble about this!" cried Lloyd, arriving too late because he could not see properly through his swollen eyelids, "How dare you touch him! What did he do? He couldn't have, because he was with me! He was with me all the time, wasn't he, Tacky?"

"That rock was deliberately rolled over."

"What if it was?" shouted Gina, losing control. "You can't prove Pros rolled it—it might have been me."

"Yes, it might—you might have been there, too. In which case you certainly deserve a hiding." He flicked the rope gently in his hands and asked, "Did you have anything to do with it? Pros says you didn't, but if I can prove you did—"

He paused: there was a stupefied silence for a moment or two, then Ernie cleared his throat and faced Jacko. "Good heavens, old man—are you out of your senses? Talking like that to a girl!"

"No, Ernie. This is a place for rough justice. I believe Gina helped take Hu and Jimmy by surprise when they landed—helped to truss them both to trees. Do you deny it, Gina? I can't confirm it, since *they* make out it was all a joke, but if you also helped smash their boat I shall have much pleasure in treating you the same as Pros, and giving you a first-class hiding."

"Thank you! That'll be the day! . . ." Gina was almost incoherent with rage, and began shouting, "Prove

it! Prove it! You can't prove Pros did it—make him *prove* it, Lloyd!”

“Very well, I will. When Pros left camp this morning he was wearing a hat. We all know that: I heard you tell him if he didn't, he'd get sunstroke.”

“What if I did?”

“*This*. I found it stuffed in a crevice of the cliff up there.” He drew from his pocket a crumpled bit of brown linen and threw it on the gunwale. “He admits he removed it for fear it might flutter and give him away. Perhaps you know this? Perhaps you were there, too?”

Before she could reply, Hu pushed through the group and faced Jacko. “I think,” he said quietly, “we'll let it go at that, Jacko. As far as Jimmy and I are concerned, accounts have been squared.”

“Yeah, that's right—by the bees, the bees on Green End,” smiled Jimmy, “—and you with Pros, Jacko. Thanks.”

For a moment Jacko looked almost angry, as a judge might who has had the correct formalities of his court upset by an intruder. “It's getting late,” continued Hu, “and we're the only ones who have had a meal. Could I row you across first and come back for the others?”

“You could,” said Jacko briefly, and strode toward the dinghy.

The mountain range that stood out jaggedly along the Peninsula was black in the shadows and afire along the ridge nearest the setting sun. Hu and Jimmy, ready

at last to leave the beach, with all made fast for the night, paused a few minutes before facing the cliff climb to watch the *Ventura*, graceful as a bird, disappear in the hazy distance swallowed by the Passage.

"I asked Jacko to call for my mail, and bring it when he returns," Hu said, following his train of thought.

"He promised to see Mum, and tell them not to worry," said Jimmy, pursuing his own thoughts, "and he left us a couple of fish and told me where to catch crays, so we can't starve."

"He thought of everything: I don't know where we'd be without Jacko!"

"Yeah, you say that"—Jimmy laughed and looked at him teasingly—"but you ordered him off your island before he was ready to go."

"Oh, I say—I didn't do that, did I, Jimmy? You know I was getting fed up with it all, and the arguments and everything. I just wanted them to go—so that we could start exploring the place. I hate brawls."

"Yeah, but old Jacko thought it was his show. He didn't appreciate being told where he got off, son. He's not a chap that's used to being pushed around."

Hu threw back his head and laughed. "Me push anyone around? No, that's funny! I wish—" he broke off and sprang to his feet, saying instead, "Get up, you lazy lout! Come up the cliff and see what it's like there. It'll soon be too dark. Oh, let's forget that mob, Jimmy! They're all right, I suppose. Jacko's a good guy, of course, and I suppose Ernie isn't bad—if he wasn't quite such an

idiot. (D'you know he wrung my hand and thanked me when they left?) But look at all the time they've wasted—!"

"Lloyd worked hard enough in that tunnel—but he won't face those bees again for ten sacks of gold," Jimmy continued, summing up the would-be explorers, "and Ern's wild about Gina—so he doesn't have good sense."

"Oh!—it's all this teaming up to grab something that isn't theirs that—that stinks. Come along—don't waste time thinking about them—up with you!"

Huon pulled the weary Jimmy to his feet and pushed him forward. "Here!" protested his tired friend as he shouldered the load and plodded upward, "I thought you said you never pushed anyone around?"

The breeze had died with the sunset; when Hu entered his kingdom, the whole world was still—so still. It was a beautiful world, bathed in the rich, royal hues of the sun's passing. Many times as they climbed they were forced to stop and stare in wonder at the riot of color over the endless flat sea.

Once on the way up they left the rough track, to examine the entrance of the dark tunnel. "I reckon Lloyd felled a tree full of wild bees—that was his trouble," said Jimmy, peering inside, "but they were Italians. It's like what I told you happened on Kangaroo Island—remember?" Carefully he released his bee from the match-box, "Off you go home!" he said to it. "Tell them to expect us at the palace tomorrow."

A little later they emerged suddenly from a low growth of scrub and found themselves on the edge of the island's central, saucer-shaped valley. On the far side, to the west, was the neat shape of a little hill etched in black against an orange sky. In that curious half-light the whole scene was fantastic—unreal, with a beauty that gripped and hurt. Beneath a fiery sky and surrounded by a tranquil sea was a small world, remote and aloof, set within its own small bounds. Black rock and pools of blood-red water were there, and no wind stirred.

"Gosh, you are right, Hu!" muttered Jimmy, "this place isn't true—it's somewhere at the back of Mars."

Hu stood gazing, lips parted, absorbing something into his innermost self. He heard nothing. After a minute Jimmy slipped quietly away to fetch what Jacko had left them, piled neatly by the tunnel, and Hu never knew he had gone.

Jimmy it was who found the camp site and returned, only to find Hu now had his back to the valley and was staring out over the limitless, empty sea—a sea changing color as the sky faded to saffron and rose.

With a little smile Jimmy left his friend to his thoughts and went to work alone, unpacking stores and collecting firewood before it grew too dark to make a camp.



XXI

The Island's Treasure

SQUATTING by their fire near the largest of the rock pools, they washed down bacon and eggs with tea, and compared notes.

"Nothing much the matter with this island," said Jimmy. "Plenty of flowers for the bees. Did you notice the gums on that comic little hill over there?"

"Yes, I climbed up there and saw the sun rise," Hu admitted.

"Couldn't you sleep either? I was on too much of a slope; I woke up once after rolling some yards and dreaming I was on a whale's back."

"I slept till nearly dawn—except for one break." He

did not mention that the break had been when he woke to find himself staring at a sweep of the heavens, with stars big and golden, intimately close; nor that he had padded forth over the dewless grass to sit for an eon in the warm, still night, legs dangling over the cliff, trying to understand . . . to understand what? . . . to understand Hu Trivett: to understand this new, strange feeling of power and a purpose in life that had gripped him till he wanted to cry . . .

“What’s it like on top of Haystack Hill?”

“No rude names permitted or I’ll christen it Everest in honor of the other beekeeper! There’s plenty of bee food there, but have you noticed the white clover here in the valley? In places it looks like thawing snow.”

“I know.” Jimmy bit into a hunk of bread and jam and gazed around him with deep satisfaction. “You ought to bless whoever came here first, for laying down good English grass, and introducing Italian queens—my word, you ought!”

“I do,” Hu answered, remembering how gratefully he had stood up there watching the sun come through clouds, his heart bursting with thanks as he surveyed his territory—his world. In this place—thanks to some unknown settlers and his own dead father—he would make himself a living, and create a home. Looking from his hill into the future, he had foreseen no easy life, but one of struggle, hard work, and perhaps at times—danger. Mistakes would be made, hard lessons must be learned, but at least he need call no man master; and something

deep within him responded with rapture to the thought of this freedom.

"From the look of it now—unless this is an exceptional season out here—you could run a decent-sized apiary," Jimmy went on. But Hu was engrossed in his dreams, recalling how he had stood on his hill like the captain on the bridge of his ship, and had realized suddenly that he might come one day to care as much for his sea-girt acres as—his river! . . . but then Felicity must be made to feel the same!—he must bring her to Green End, show her all his island . . . sail her across the bay and through the Passage, watch her face as she first saw it (floating like a silver castle with the sea for its moat) . . . but by then Felicity might be another Felicity, just as he was now another Hu. Perhaps in the long years of making ready for her, he might lose her . . . she might never come . . .

"Mind you, Hu, the one might cancel out the other," Jimmy insisted (he had apparently been talking away unnoticed for some time), "and then wouldn't you be up a tree!"

"Er . . . should I—how do you mean?"

"What I've been saying. You might buy some bees and build up quite a nice little apiary on all these flowers. Then you'd be sure to run a few sheep, wouldn't you?—and perhaps keep a goat for milk. Well, don't you see the sheep and goat would graze off the flower heads, and you'd wonder where the honey was? See? Cancel each other out, like."

They discussed the possibilities of the island further as they washed up and tidied camp. "Mind you," said Jimmy as he put a crayfish on the fire to boil, "these crays are worth something to you—they fetch big prices now the tails are sent, frozen, to America, to earn dollars. Only, for fishing you'd need a boat."

"I need a boat in any case. I was thinking, Jimmy—since we've damaged your uncle's boat and have to make that right in any case—would he sell her to me?—that's if I can raise enough cash!"

"He might—he never uses her. He paid thirty pounds for her though, and I can't help much unless I have a good honey season. You can have the three-pound photo prize. Wonder how our bees are doing up at Sagglily." A thought struck him and he abruptly abandoned the cooking. "Look, aren't we forgetting the treasure?" he demanded. "If we scoop that in, you can buy the Royal Yacht and we won't need Unk's. Come on, you poor old millionaire, come and let's see what there is in your coffers!"

Jimmy stood still in the tunnel Lloyd had made with such labor, listening intently. "Bees!— I can hear 'em."

"Yes, and I can smell honey," Hu agreed.

"Right—so can I. But the funny thing is, the bees aren't where he chopped down the tree! Come in further—it's safe enough."

A few minutes later he cried, "Ha—the first bit of

treasure!" and held up an ax. "Someone forgot this in his hurry to leave."

"It'll come in handy."

"I'll say it will! Look, his tree did sweep down some poor colony of bees from somewhere, as I thought, but he was trying to get in the wrong way. I'm going to make my own track. Follow me, but as quietly as you can." His voice dropped to a whisper. "We won't disturb 'em more than we need."

Close behind Jimmy, Hu found himself pushing aside tremendous fern fronds as long as himself and climbing a thick tree trunk, green with moss. It was steep and slippery, but it made a track for them like a gangway, deep into the gully.

The palmlike fronds of the tree ferns still blocked the view, until Jimmy pulled some aside and dramatically revealed an extraordinary sight.

Close before their eyes was a shallow cavern in a wall of limestone, and hanging from the roof like velvet curtains, huge honeycombs hung down, shimmering with bees. One wide shaft of sunlight, slatting through the green foliage, lit up the largest comb and touched the floor beneath. The comb was suspended from above like a stalactite. It was pendulous with bees, but there was nothing like a stalagmite to meet it—only queerly shaped lumps of black on the chalky floor.

Jimmy studied them for a time, then he nudged Hu; whispering, "There's our treasure! That was what Lloyd saw! Remember what he said when he had us tied to the

trees? 'I saw something dark ahead in a sort of cave.' You bet your sweet life he mistook those piles of old, black, broken combs and rubbish, for the thing he was looking for!"

"Sure that's all it is?"

"I'll swear there's nothing else in there."

Huon leaned forward to examine it himself, while he quoted softly, "'I returned . . . scarcely expecting to find treasure, but looking up, saw what was hidden in the cleft! A fortune for the brave—but have I the courage—'"

"—Yeah—and of course he was dead right, your dad! There's a fortune in honey there—or something better for you, the *bees*—the swarms—which you can take to start a proper apiary in proper hives up above in the valley."

"But have I the courage?" repeated Hu.

"Aw—fair go! Of course you've got nerve enough to take a swarm or two for a start—I'll help you!"

Huon thanked him with a nod, and smiled. He could not stop thinking about his father, his own father, who might have stood just here when he discovered the bees—the father he could scarcely remember, planning to buy the island. It was a warm, rich, friendly thought.

Somewhere a dead branch dropped with a crash and a new note crept into what had been a drowsy murmuring of bees, changing it to a sound like the sea in gulches of the rocks. "Get going!" whispered Jimmy urgently.

"We don't want to be mistaken for Lloyd!" Hurriedly they followed the spongy, green path back to the tunnel.

Emerging into the strong sunlight, they stood a minute blinking in the glare to restore their sight. "That was a sell," Jimmy sighed. "I bet you are disappointed finding a lot of old beeswax instead of sacks of gold."

"I didn't really have any very solid hopes, you know, in spite of the diary. It would have been almost too good to be true if I'd been left an island complete with all the money I wanted to develop it. Yet, Jim, I can't help wondering—since the treasure was supposed to have been hidden some time ago—couldn't the beeswax be on top of it?"

"Most unlikely. Look at it like this: put yourself in the place of the shipwrecked gentleman crawling ashore half dead. The storm subsides and you start yanking gold up the beach. Right. Exhausted and hungry, you are more likely to think about collecting gulls' eggs for your tea, or looking out for rescue, but we'll say you have a one-track mind centered on gold. Well, you stagger up the cliff with all the metal you can carry. Why you don't simply park it in a safe hole on the way, I can't say, but you like climbing, and heavy weights, so you lug it to the top. Next, you notice the gully. Right. Now, you haven't the tools Lloyd had, to cut a track in, and there are plenty of places to hide it without that, but you got a knock on the head with a bit of driftwood or something, which makes you want to push on to the

limestone cliff, with a fancy to dump it just *there*—and nowhere else.”

“What about the bees?”

“Exactly!—and if there were no bees there, wouldn’t it just show up on the white floor of that shallow cave!”

“You certainly couldn’t bury it there,” Hu agreed, nodding.

They made the grand tour of the island, continuing along the south cliff past the spot where Prosper had rolled the rock down, and watched for the *Ventura* to appear. Once a small fishing boat raised their hopes as it emerged from the Passage: Jimmy thought it had anchored for the night in Bryant’s Corner, a spot off Schouten Island known to fishermen.

“How big is Schouten?” asked Hu, with a newcomer’s interest in the neighboring big estate.

“About six square miles, and well watered by creeks. Makes you feel small, doesn’t it?”

“I wouldn’t want Green End any larger. Doesn’t anyone live over there?”

“Oh, there’s a good house, and Unk told me a chap used to run about eight hundred sheep there at one time, but I don’t think he stayed in winter. Now,” he continued, “shall we climb Haystack Hill, or go back and finish cooking that cray? I’m hungry!”

They returned to their camp, where Jimmy took the boiled crayfish and fried it with a pinch of curry for their midday meal. “That was the best lobster I ever tasted,”

Huon told him, as they rested after the feast in the shade of some scrub. He rolled over lazily for a better view of the valley cupped beneath; it was no longer fantastic, but green and glowing with sunshine, the water sparkling silver in the pools, the air above sweet with the mingled fragrance of bush scents and clover flowers. Strange how quickly it could change from the mysterious and grand to something homely and intimate. He thought it could never be monotonous, winter or summer, on Green End.

"It's like Innisfree," his rambling thought continued. He did not realize he had spoken aloud.

"What's Innisfree?" Jimmy inquired.

"Oh!—Innisfree—you know, by the poet named Yeats?"

"It sounds as though it's about a pub."

" 'I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles
made:—' "

"Hold it!" Jimmy stopped him. "Where are you going to get clay from? Not up here! And wattles are no good at all for building a shack. Didn't you know they rot in no time?"

Hu grinned and continued teasingly,

" 'Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee—' "

"Aw, cut it out!" objected Jimmy in disgust, "*one beel*! How much honey will *that* give you! As for nine rows of broad beans, gosh, I hate the things, don't you? One pod would do me. Why don't you grow spuds, if the

soil is good enough? They're a much better proposition."

" 'And live alone in the bee-loud glade,' " Hu insisted, listening to the busy sounds of bees in clover.

"Crazy—plumb crazy; I said so before."

"Though I suppose stone—rock—what's lying around, would be the thing to build with," Hu went on unheeding. "That's what the first settlers used. Have you seen the ruins of the house?" he asked abruptly.

"I noticed the stone chimney sticking up like a sore thumb."

"It's in a good spot over there in the lee of the hill, looking down the valley. Come and see!"

"Mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun," grumbled Jimmy, trailing in Hu's wake to a slope that bulged with fallen masonry, cloaked in greenery and the tangle of a yellow rose gone wild.

"Yeah, the position's all right," was his comment, as he looked round with a practical eye. "Might be a bit far from the creek pools to fetch water. That's until you got a roof on, to catch your own rain-water supply."

"What I mean to do"—Hu perched himself on a fallen block and explained slowly, his eyes fixed on the sea beyond the green valley—"is rebuild this, a bit at a time. Couldn't I take swarms and build up an apiary at the same time?"

"I'd do that first of all!"

"All right: but first comes a boat for catching crays and getting us here—and if it's the *Pram*, there's a good deal to do to it, first."

"The *Pram*? Don't insult Unk's boat!"

"It's the *Pram*—if you call my mountain 'Haystack Hill'!"

"Aw—well! . . . now, say you buy *Pram* and fix her up, next you should get the hives and transfer some bees before it's too late in the season. If you've any cash over—"

"I haven't!—It'll take years, but I want to build up a house, an apiary, and a small flock of sheep, even if I begin with one colony, two lambs, and these bits of stone here."

"You seem to have it all planned!"

"Not all, Jimmy. Not the one important thing I can't do without."

"What's that—cash?"

"No—you!"

Jimmy laughed. "Oh, I'll go in with you of course, if you want. That is, if you help me with my bees in the busy seasons. You could borrow my equipment, too, and that would save capital. But I'd have to stay home in the winter and early spring, to help Unk with the tractor work."

"Of course; and this first year I'll be learning about sheep—but I think old man Seward would let me off after shearing time."

Jimmy stole a glance at his friend and smiled to himself; did ever anything change a fellow so quickly, he wondered, as this island had changed Hu? Well, not so much changed as—brought him out? There he sat,

his thoughts miles away, yet somehow alert—alive—eager. An off-beat sort of guy, but a good friend. Legal partnerships never worked—but this would work. Aloud he asked, a little slyly, “What’s the idea of building up the house again? You needn’t do that for donkey’s years—if ever. A tent is all we should need.”

“A tent’s all right in summer. Though, anyhow . . .” Hu began, and stopped abruptly.

“Did you think of living here all the year round?”

“I might, one day. Why not?”

“Aha!” Jimmy grinned as he spoke. “I thought there was some catch in that living alone in a bee-loud glade!” With these words, he sprang up and made off quickly, dodging through the light scrub to the cliff edge, in another vain search for the sails of the *Ventura*.



XXII

"T'll Buy It for the Boy"

THE temperature dropped: next morning clouds shadowed the sea and a squall of rain blew up. Their feet began to wear a track from the camp in the valley, to the nearest point where they could both look south for the *Ventura* and keep an eye on the beached *Pram*. So far the wind was merely gusty, and had not swung to the dreaded southwest quarter.

Jimmy began to count their supplies anxiously, and to spend much time fishing from the rocks. Huon refused to be properly concerned at the delay: he walked about blissfully, exploring and discovering, in no hurry to leave, and loving his island in every mood of the weather.

Toward evening, when they had given up hope for that day, they went westward and climbed Haystack Hill. From the top they saw the rugged Peninsula beneath an angry sunset. A yacht was at anchor in the shelter of exquisite Wineglass Bay, whose sands curved round as white as a sea gull's breast.

"She's taking shelter; she fears a storm," said Huon.

"But she's not the *Ventura*," Jimmy answered with a sigh. "Come on, we'd better get back. There's another squall coming."

As they walked down the valley, Hu pointed out a flat green space. "How about this for the apiary?" he suggested. "To please you, we'll have the hives in two long lines—though I think two half circles is more natural, somehow, to the valley."

"Gosh! Whoever heard of an apiary not in straight lines?" cried Jimmy, deeply shocked.

"What about fencing it, to keep the sheep outside?"

"Yeah, but that's expensive."

"We'd want to fence in a bit for a garden, because the soil around the house is good, isn't it? I dug around as best I could with a stick and it seemed black and rich. I must remember to bring a spade."

"Make a note," said Jimmy, "or you'll forget. As for a garden, we'd want one for flowers for the bees. Small fruits should be here—raspberries and that—and there's always a market for berries, you know. I was thinking about apricots; they do well where there's no frost—and you don't get frost at sea level, but you get sea spray."

"I'd love to plant a small orchard," said Hu, his eyes shining.

"Steady, son!" warned the practical Jimmy. "It's a long time before you see your money back with orchards, and a lot of outlay. And some fruit trees won't stand sea air!"

"Umm—I've been thinking. After I leave Cottlestone, I might get a job in the winter. Is there any demand for someone who can paint boats?"

They strolled on, making plans for the future, while the wind gathered force until it swept down in wild gusts even in the sheltered valley.

"Gosh! What will it be like in winter?" shouted Jimmy, as he and Hu lashed down their tent for the night.

"Nice breeze!" grinned Hu, who seemed almost to prefer his island like this to the calm, hot days of the past.

There was a moon behind the torn clouds and he spent much of the night wandering around quite happily, making sure the *Pram* was safe.

At dawn he experienced the miracle of the wind's dying away completely, and saw day break once more in gentle beauty over his island. Creeping into the tent again, he found Jimmy awake and told him the news. "No need to worry—the sea will be like a millpond in another hour or two."

"Then what about a spot of sleep?" mumbled Jimmy, turning over.

They both slept late; the sun was drawing back the moisture from the refreshed earth, the grass renewed and sparkling, when they crawled out and set about preparing their scanty breakfast. Wolfing his down, Huon ran off to scan the sea from the edge of the cliff.

One glance below showed, to his great astonishment, the *Ventura* already lying at anchor in her old mooring in the lee of the Cray Claw Rocks. Jacko and some stranger were already loading up the dinghy and were about to come ashore.

Hailing them, and getting a shout in return, Huon sped back to fetch Jimmy. They made such good time down the cliff path that the other two had only just landed, when the boys reached the beach.

"Did you think you were really marooned?" Jacko greeted them. "I was ready to sail yesterday, but I didn't like the look of the weather. We've been lucky: you were nearly left here over Christmas, but we've just done it."

"Why, what's the date?" asked Jimmy. "I've lost count."

"Tomorrow's Christmas Eve." Jacko turned to the small, shy man with him and clapped a hand on the man's shoulder. "Here!—let me introduce the expert, before we talk. George Winnow will soon fix your boat and make her seaworthy again—won't you, George?—better than before, if I know him! We must get to work quickly, though, because he ought to have left for his holidays."

As they carried various tools and materials to the scene of trouble, it was arranged that only Hu should help George, while Jacko and Jimmy would break camp and go fishing.

Under George's clever hands, the repairs were completed by the time the others had returned with some fine rock cod, and they all ate an enormous dinner of fish fried on the beach.

Immediately after, Jacko had them at work launching the *Pram* and stripping her for towing behind the *Ventura*. It was not until they were well out to sea, with Green End once more a gray castle in the distance, that Hu and Jimmy could relax. Even then Hu was kept busy helping Jacko, till they were through the Passage with sails set for Sandy Cove, now faintly to be seen across the bay.

Sprawled on deck, Hu was idly contemplating the hazy, dark-blue line of the land, over which hung the smoke of more than one bush fire, when Jacko roused him. "I forgot to give you your mail," he said, passing it over.

Glancing quickly at the handwriting, Hu slipped one letter into his pocket unopened; Felicity's could wait for a less public occasion. A joint packet from Mark and Phoebe was covered in air stamps and contained enclosures. He opened Mark's first; it began with a good round tirade against winter in England—"You lucky youth to be escaping our foul climate"—and then went on to mention their birthday gift, "which Phoebe and I hope you may

find useful in seeing more of Tasmania; they don't seem to have shown you much, so far."

The gift was attached to a snap of himself and Felicity in *Spurwing*, taken the day they won the cup; it was a check for ten pounds. Hu tossed both to Jimmy, saying, "Here's our deposit on *Pram*."

"My word!" said Jimmy: it was not clear whether his admiration was chiefly for the check or the picture of Felicity, at which he gazed intently.

"Here's Hu's sailing dinghy," he said at length, showing the picture to Jacko, who studied it carefully and asked, "Why didn't you bring it with you?—and the pretty girl, too!"

"You wouldn't need to buy *Pram*," Jimmy commented, with a grin, "if you had it here!" A thought struck him. "I say, why don't you sell it?" he asked. "Then you'd have the cash you need."

"Can't," said Hu briefly. "I've lent it to someone." He tucked away the photo and check safely and returned to Mark's letter, encountering on the way an enclosure with a strangely familiar writing. He stared at it, puzzled, hesitated, then quickly returned to Mark's letter. Skimming the page he came to this: "You must have missed the last leaf of your father's diary. I only found it the other day, when it fell out of the attaché case I seldom use. Sorry I didn't notice it at the time . . ."

"Jimmy! Here's the missing page at the end of the diary!" He waved it at his friend.

“Go on! Fact?—Well, don’t look till you’ve got the whole thing together—it’s in that bag, there.”

Fumbling in his haste, Hu dragged out the diary, put the page in its proper place, and read aloud, “ ‘I returned to explore further, scarcely expecting to find treasure, but looking up, saw what was hidden in the cleft. A fortune for the brave—but have I the courage to interfere with bees, even if they are my own property? I know nothing about them except that it takes knowledge as well as courage to deal with the little creatures. Olaf promises he will find me a beemaster to teach me the art. He agrees honey might be a source of profit, but he thinks I am mad to want to buy the island. I suppose it is a shocking extravagance, but I’ve always had a longing to live on an island—perhaps the boy will feel the same.’ ”

“That’s all?” asked Jimmy as Hu’s voice failed abruptly.

“Ummn.” But his eyes read on, what he could not bring himself to speak aloud. “ ‘They say when you come to die it is never your extravagances you regret, only your economies. So I’ll buy the island—I’ll buy it for the boy.’ ”



XXIII

The Rua Rua Again

THE rest and peace aboard the *Ventura* gave place to a great bustle of activity at Sandy Cove, since Jacko wanted to turn about at once and take George Winnow to Swansea.

Huon and Jimmy packed all their belongings in the *Pram*, made their farewells, and climbed in, too. Before they pushed off, George passed down the paint and brushes. "Give her another coat over the mend and she'll do fine!" he called.

"Don't make her too nice-looking, or Unk will put up the price," warned Jimmy, laughing.

A handful of people had gathered from nowhere on the jetty, to watch the *Ventura* depart. Among them was the small figure of Perky Taft. He grinned at Jimmy and informed him his uncle was delivering some cases of potatoes to the shop.

"Would you like to skip up and tell him I'm here?" suggested Jimmy:

"No, I wanna see where this is going." He jerked his thumb at the *Ventura*.

"I can tell you that—and how about an ice cream?" Jimmy persuaded, but Perky was not to be tempted from the joy of satisfying his curiosity in his own way, so Jimmy said he would go himself to find Unk.

Having put him down at the jetty, Huon was moving away to row the *Pram* to the boat sheds when someone hailed him. The clear, rather strident voice breaking the drowsy calm of the Cove took him straight back to the Thames. "Hey!—it's me, Hu!"

He swung around to face Barbara Seward.

"Gosh, what have you been doing to yourself?" she exclaimed. "You look different, somehow."

"Only dirtier! I've been going native since we met last. When did you turn up? I thought you weren't coming home till Christmas?"

"It *is* Christmas! It's Christmas Day tomorrow, you goose!" Leaning over and lowering her voice, she asked urgently, "Do tell—quick!—did you find anything?"

"Any—?—oh, that! . . . no. No, it didn't exist after all."

"But—! Oh, don't be an oyster! Tell me!"

"There's really nothing to tell. There wasn't any of what you think."

"But Lloyd said—"

"Oh"—Hu looked up with interest—"what did Lloyd say? That he left me on Tom Tiddler's ground, picking up gold and silver?"

"No, not quite that—but didn't they all leave because you own the island, or something?"

"Did Lloyd tell you that?"

Barbara glanced round, came closer, and took off her sunglasses. "No, he didn't. Ernie said something—but—" she smiled disarmingly—"I'll come clean, Hu. To be truthful I can't get *anything* out of them, not even old Ern! I've just come from Fipwood now. When I saw the *Ventura* putting in, I gave chase. All they tell me is that you can have the old island and everything on it! The fact is they're much too excited, and much too het up about leaving Fipwood to think of another thing."

"Leaving Fipwood!" he repeated.

"Yes, didn't you hear? Your aunt's sold it. They're all going to live in Launceston in a flat now, but the really exciting thing is that Lloyd has been offered a part in a big film they are going to make in Sydney."

"Does Aunt Myrtie mind?"

"About Fipwood? Oh, no. I think she's really thankful. They all are, even Gina, though of course she puts on an act about leaving her old ancestral home. Pros is the one with ideas, though; he says he's going to become

a great business executive and buy it back one day. Imagine!—that little twirp Pros! He likes the idea of high school next year, anyway. And isn't it splendid about Lloyd? He may even be able to work Gina into the movies one day—or so she thinks, though I don't suppose he'd be so crazy as to do it."

"So all this was happening while Jimmy and I were marooned on Green End!"

"Well, it gave you time to look around. Didn't you truly find anything there?"

"Lots . . . but you see, Barbara, the treasure my father left me wasn't gold from a wreck. That was a mistake. It was something much better—Green End Island itself!"

"I know you're disappointed, though you won't admit it."

"I'm not—it's all the treasure I need!"

"Well, I must go. They're waiting for me. Oh! I've gone and given you all the news and forgotten the real message! It is that you've got to spend Christmas Day with us at Cottlestone. Will you, Hu? I told the Goguds they wouldn't get you as they've had you lately, and they didn't make any fuss. Mum expects you, and Dad says Neal or Ernie will come and fetch you from the Stones'. By the way, are you still learning about bees, or why are you there? Nobody tells me a thing!"

An impatient hoot from the hill cut her farewell short, and she tripped off down the length of the jetty on high-heeled shoes.

Hu stared after her, thinking over her news and the strangeness of life. Here was Barbara, who, such a short time ago was dabbling her fingers in the river while she asked about a map, a map made by Huon's dead father . . .

He sighed and dipped in his oars, then grinned as he reflected that at least you never knew what life held for you round the corner!

He had just finished unloading the *Pram* when the truck rattled over loose stones to the back of the shed, and Jimmy and his uncle descended.

"He's come to look at the damage. I've made Unk an offer for this old wreck," Jimmy said, giving a contemptuous kick toward the repaired portion.

"Umm . . . Thirty pounds I paid for her, which was cheap, but she's worth forty now with that new bit in her. It's made her a new boat," said Unk, shaking his head sadly. "I might get fifty easy from some fisherman, now she's done up. Only needs a lick of paint to be worth sixty," he ruminated, ". . . guineas, that is! At least sixty guineas with that new boom in."

For a moment Jimmy looked utterly dismayed, then broke into a bellow of laughter. "You win, Unk! I really thought you meant it, for a moment! Look, you old skin-flint, she wasn't worth a fiver lying on the beach at Green End. Jacko's friend mended her for nothing, so—what will you take for her?"

"I didn't wreck her, did I?" asked his uncle. "And I never said I wanted to sell her, either."

Huon broke in to ask them to help lift her into the shed. His disappointment was acute. Somehow he had come to look on the little boat as his own, and he passed a hand lovingly over her side as he chocked her in place. "I would like to give her a lick of paint inside, while I'm here," he suggested. "George said not to leave it too long."

"Plenty of daylight left," said Unk. "Jimmy will pick you up when he fetches the last load of potatoes to the shop for me. He'll have to do that if he wants the truck. Did you tell Hu," he asked, "about your friend at Saggily and his message?"

"No!—that's because you haggled about the *Pram*! There's good news, Hu, from Ginger," he told his friend excitedly. "The honey flow is on with a vengeance! Blue gum! Couldn't be better—but he says we must come at once."

"And the message has been waiting for you for days," added Unk.

"Well, if I fix up the spuds today, can I have the truck tomorrow, Unk?" asked Jimmy.

"Tomorrow? Tomorrow is Christmas Day!"

"Aw, I forgot! Well, the next day?"

"All right."

"Good . . . that suit you, Hu?"

"Yes," laughed Hu, "as long as you give me a couple

of hours now." He was already stirring up the paint.

They moved to go, but Unk turned back. "If you paint her up, I might ask seventy," he informed him. "How much can you afford?"

"This!" He grabbed his coat and fetched out the money from Mark. "Will this do as a deposit?"

"It'll do. The rest is a Christmas box. To you both!" He added quickly, "And don't tell Jim!"

"Good for you, Unk!" exclaimed his nephew with satisfaction. They went away delightedly, wrangling about something else.

Huon worked alone in rich content for some time. Then, since the light was beginning to fail him, he got out a pencil and inscribed *PRAM* proudly on her stern. He opened the doors as wide as possible and got to work quickly, coloring it in.

He was still bending over the boat, putting on the last touches, when some uneasy instinct told him he was being watched. It was seldom anyone came near the old boat sheds, so he called "Hello?" inquiringly, and stepped outside.

A thin, bent figure stood at the foot of a sand dune, silently watching with faded blue eyes. Hu went back, put away his things, picked up the key they had left with him, and carefully locked up.

The old man was in the same spot when he looked round, but this time he lifted a skinny arm and jerked his thumb in a gesture to Hu to step nearer.

Wondering what the man wanted, Hu obeyed good-

naturedly. Looking down on the seaman's faded jersey he asked, "Do you want *me*?"

The Adam's apple moved jerkily in the thin throat. The old man's mouth worked as though he were struggling for speech, until at last he brought out huskily, "You de doctor's boy? You Hu Trivett?"

"Oh!"—it flashed through Huon's brain who this must be—"Are you Olaf?" He felt it was not very polite, but he knew no other name for the man mentioned in his father's diary as "Olaf" or "the Dane."

"Ya, ya!" the old man croaked. "Dey tell me you come . . . I wait till you come. I take you to de doctor's island, no? I show you der Green En'?"

"Oh, thanks, thanks very much, Olaf. I wanted to meet you. I heard you were ill in hospital. Are you all right, now?"

"Ya, ya! Dey no kill dis Dane so quick, na-a-a!" His smile revealed surprisingly white teeth.

Quickly Huon picked up the thin, brown hand and shook it. "So glad you spoke to me," he grinned. "I have wanted to meet you. You remember my father?"—the old head nodded vigorously—"he mentioned you in—in a little book he kept. Do you—do you remember him well?" he asked shyly. For answer the blue eyes beamed. "Naa, him do I not forget! Na-a-a! I take de doctor, ya, to de Green En'. He loff der Green En'. You haf come der, no?"

"I've just come back," Hu smiled, "but I didn't find the treasure!"

The old man cleared his throat and spat angrily. "What for you look for de gol' on de Green En'?" he demanded.

"Isn't there supposed to be some there from a wreck?"

"I tell de doctor, 'I take you to de island of de wreck.' Always he say, 'Na, Olaf—keep de gol', I come not to de *Rua Rua* till I haf de Green En'!'—So!"

"Then it was not on Green End? The wreck was somewhere else, after all! They said—my cousin Lloyd Gogud, said—"

"Dat Lloyd!" he spat the words out. "He ask—I tell nossings! I tell dat one nossings! You tink I tell dat Lloyd where de gol' from *Rua Rua* haf become? Na! Na!" He waved his arms and muttered angrily, making uncouth sounds in his throat.

Not knowing what else to do, Huon waited till Olaf grew a little calmer. When he turned toward the old man, however, it was exactly as at first—he stared intently and asked, "You de doctor's boy?—you Hu Trivett?"

After a time he realized the poor worn mind was wandering in a circle. Hearing Jimmy's signal on the horn, he waited only to answer a few of the same questions patiently over again, then made his excuses and slipped away.

The last he heard was the old man muttering to the ground, "I come not to *Rua Rua* till I haf de Green En' . . ."



XXIV

Black Swans

ONCE Christmas Day itself was passed, spent delightfully at Cottlestone, Huon found himself working as hard as he had ever worked in his life before. The camp at Sagglily taught him what could be asked of a keeper of bees in a bush apiary, working against time in the hot sun.

At night the two boys ate something out of a tin and rolled under the truck to sleep, having no energy left to put up the tent. Dawn saw them at work again; through the day, growing ever more tired, they were stimulated to fresh efforts each time a sixty-pound tin of honey,

warm and liquid from the extractor, was hoisted onto the truck.

When nearly half a ton was securely stowed in place, they set out for home—leaving the bees to clean up the spilled honey, and—with luck—fill again the empty combs in the supers.

Some country storekeepers bought a few of their tins, so that they clattered proudly down the coast with a diminished load and some money in their pockets.

"You see if I don't get rid of at least six tins to our own store at the Cove," Jimmy boasted.

"I won't cramp your style. I'll get out and take a look at the paint on the *Pram*. But we're not there yet," he added, as the chimneys of Fipwood came into view, "and I was wondering—could you stop a minute here? I want to run in and leave a small tin of the sweet stuff as a Christmas present for my aunt."

"I don't think they are still at Fipwood."

"Someone's there—I can see smoke from the chimney."

Huon fervently hoped he would see no one but his aunt. Already, as he hurried through the pines, he was wishing he had not had this wild idea, especially when, nearing the terrace, he could see one of the boys sitting on the balustrade.

As he drew closer he found it was Tacky—Tacky, staring listlessly into space and evidently unaware of his approach. Something in the boy's attitude checked Huon from slipping past without a word; instead he called warmly, "Hello, Tacky. Is Aunt Myrtie in?"

"Hello, Hu. Yes, Mum's in," he said, and turned his head away again.

It was so unlike Tacky: Huon wondered very much what was wrong as he hurried inside.

He found his aunt looking rather helplessly at a floor strewn with the wreckage of packing. She greeted him most kindly, asked no questions, but told him at once all their news. "And it's so sad that you've just missed Lloyd!" she continued. "He's been here helping me, but this morning he took Prosper on the back of his bike to Launceston. Gina is there with the Merrimens, getting everything ready. Tacky and I will go after the sale."

"I saw Tacky just now. He seemed rather down at the mouth, Aunt Myrtie. I suppose that's because Prosper has gone."

"No, dear boy, he wanted to stay here. As a matter of fact, those two are not really . . . they don't seem to get on as well as they did. I don't know why. Oddly enough, it's Tacky who is most upset about our leaving; it seems he doesn't want to go to a city. He had set his heart on being a farmer. But he'll forget all about that when he gets away."

When at last Huon was allowed to leave, he found Tacky still staring forlornly at nothing. On a sudden impulse he cried, "Come down to the truck, Tacky, and see the honey!"

The youngster came without any enthusiasm and stared at the load. Much to Jimmy's surprise, and a little to his own, Hu invited the boy to climb in and go with

them as far as the Cove. Tacky hesitated a moment, but then he obeyed.

"You go ahead, Jimmy, and do your sales talk," Hu said presently. "I want Tacky to come and admire my painting." He led the way to the boat shed while the boy followed, listless and incurious.

It was not until he stood before the boat, reading the name *PRAM*, that he glanced up with a faint smile and something of his old impudence, "She's better than she was—before . . ." he said.

"She is that," agreed Hu cheerfully, "and, Tacky, I'll be taking her over to Green End quite a lot. Like to come too—in the holidays?"

His nod was the briefest, but his eyes met Hu's and his sudden happy smile showed there was peace between them.

There was much to do when Huon and Jimmy got back to the farm. As well as unpacking the things from their camp, Hu had to repack for Cottlestone, Jimmy having promised to drive him there as early as possible.

Instead of getting busy, however, Huon watched Jimmy go off with his uncle, and then wandered about restlessly. He went into the kitchen and talked to Jimmy's mother, till he saw she wanted to start cooking. Then he strolled out to the apiary and had a look round. He did not linger there, but went on through the gate in the hedge.

He felt unsettled; not quite happy at the thought of

the new job just because it *was* new, and meant adjusting himself to a new life. For the first time the magic of planning for his island failed to hold him. He knew he was homesick for the river.

Kicking aside the dry sticks, crunching the brown cylinders of bark underfoot, he started to climb up Windy Hill. He paused once, thinking to sit down, but found ants jumping spitefully from a nest at his feet, and collected a painful bite on the ankle.

He hurried on, wondering what he had ever seen to admire in this bush country, and came out on top, on an unexpectedly clear space.

Walking to a rock just visible in the summer gloaming, he climbed it to get a view . . . yes, what he sought was there! A mere shadow on the sea beyond the Passage, but—it was there! The last faint glow of pink in the sky gave it a different substance, unlike the hard blue of the closer Schouten . . . Oh, his lovely island!

The sight calmed and cheered him.

Once more he fell to making plans, peering out at the shadow isle as a sorcerer peers at the crystal in his palm.

Perhaps he, too, was forseeing the future. Could he know the day would come when one Huon Trivett, after years of battling and courageous effort, would stand in the post office at Sandy Cove, frowning as he tried to compose a certain cable?

He could not see *now* the slow grin replace the frown as he dipped the broken nib in the awful ink and wrote

Felicity's address, with the question underneath, "WILL . . . YOU . . . CREW . . . ME . . . AT . . . RANELAGH . . . THIS . . . JUNE?"

It was dark now, and a curious creaking told him that two swans were flying overhead—two black swans. "Their wings need oiling." Who had said that? Felicity, of course! On the river, the day she had told him not to let himself be "pushed around."

Too dark to see his island any more. He turned his steps downhill toward the orange glow of light streaming from the kitchen window of Jimmy's farm.

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DISCARD



NAN CHAUNCY, seen here holding her pet wombat, Pompey, writes from her home on the island of Tasmania: "For twelve years now, the thousand acres of Chauncy Vale has been a sanctuary for wild things. There's a bit of Chauncy Vale in all of my books except perhaps *A Fortune for the Brave*, which resulted from a visit to Kangaroo Island and the fascinating Sanctuary at Flinders Chase, and the romantic story of the wild bees of the Island.

"The house my father built is my home in this lovely valley; my husband, Anthony Chauncy, breeds many kinds of interesting animals; my daughter, Heather, is my best critic. What more can an author ask?"

Mrs. Chauncy, who for many years has worked actively with Girl Scouts, is Australian Editor for *Council Fire*, international Girl Scout magazine. She also writes scripts for the Australian Broadcasting Commission. Two of her books, *Tiger in the Bush*, 1958, and *Devils' Hill*, 1959, were chosen as best Australian children's book of their year.

